THE NATURE OF THEORETICAL HISTORY AND ITS APPLICATION IN THE WORKS OF WILLIAM ROBERTSON

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DEDICATION

To the Memory

of

Richard Patrick Boylan

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Pauline Moore, hereby declare that I am the sole author of the entire work entitled The Nature of Theoretical History and its Application in the Works of William Robertson.

Pauline Moore

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ABSTRACT

In the history of historical writing, the eighteenth century is an age of considerable importance, for it was during this time that both the philosophical and the theoretical interpretations were developed. The former, depending in part on modern science, on the belief that society must be interpreted through regular patterns of causes, and that human history was essentially secular, sought to study man through his institutions. Yet, although the philosophes attempted to establish laws through which we could relate the past and the present, they were unable to do so to any considerable extent. With the exception of the Physiocratic school, the French philosophical historians show little evidence of having replaced those very works which they condemned. They made some valuable suggestions as to the manner in which connecting factors should be sought, and they did attempt to work by strict 'scientific' standards. But, as is shown particularly in the work of Voltaire, they depended to a considerable extent on the actions of the individual as cause, and had no developed theory of human nature or of the means by which society in general advanced or changed. Because of this, they were unable to postulate any general laws by which the universal could replace the unique or the 'historical'.

Although theoretical history is also concerned with the study of man and his institutions, and although it is 'philosophical' in this sense, it is nonetheless able to overcome many of those difficulties which the French writers

contended with. This is so because it is based on two principles which conform more closely to the idea of general and universal laws - the heterogeneity of ends and the capacity of man to progress. Such principles, derived from observation of men in various societies and at different ages, fulfilled the demands of the theoretical concept of philosophical history: that it should deal with major issues and work along regular lines. Instead of being concerned with the isolated, therefore, theoretical history is able to deny the validity of unique or 'historical' factors.

Although it may owe much to the works of many earlier writers, such as Machiavelli, Montesquieu, and the commonwealth school, it also goes beyond these. It has absorbed the idea of property/power correlation and that of the necessary limitation of men by the form of society in which they live, and developed these to suggest a stadial progress of human nature which is closely related to the division of land or means of subsistence of any society. Through this it is able to show not only that societies must differ as they change from one type of property to another, and that man's nature is developed or repressed according to the degree to which he is free to express his natural self-interest; but also that each stage of development has characteristics which will be found in all similar stages. It can therefore relate the past to the present in terms of general laws of property division; and at the same time it can also show that each stage of progress expresses a part of the human experience, and that these parts come together in a whole that is human nature.

That diversity could be made into a whole was further demonstrated by the theoretical historians in their belief that man, when left to himself, was able to advance from one stage to the next because of his self-interest. This principle, they felt, though often expressed in ways that might seem irrational, was an integral and permanent feature of human nature and remained so in all ages; and when man was allowed to so act he often achieved considerable ends without having any intention of so doing because of the process of heterogeneity of ends. The economic and political philosophy of the theoretical historians, then, was one of laissez faire, a philosophy which they felt ought to be applied in the study of the modern or more philosophical age as well as in the assessment of the savage and barbarous ones. Man neither thought in rational terms nor acted in a conscious manner, and any degree of the philosophical in his society has been produced through the natural coming together of a multitude of events.

Such an interpretation is of considerable importance, not only because it links all ages of human history through general patterns, but also because it denies those theories which cannot accept all forms of human action. As all development and interaction must be based on a general social level, not on any concept of what society 'ought' to be, so also should we see that all expressions of human nature are valid in that they reflect man's nature, though his actions may not always be beneficial. In particular, the theoretical historians believed that there was considerable merit in the commercial society in particular, and this

because it permitted a greater number of men to become independent and thus free to benefit from, and express, their natural self-interest. Older theories that suggested commerce was detrimental to man were dismissed, and it was felt that if society was maintained in a manner beneficial to all, the commercial state could hardly be seen as denying or perverting man's nature. Furthermore, it was thought that men could correct some of the faults which might exist in the more philosophical state through an awareness that it was in one's own interest to do so; thus, although the theoretical writers do not believe that all wrongs can be rectified, indeed, that we must accept inequities, they emphasise that those that can, are changed through the natural operation of the human mind, not through some process or set of ideas outside the social experience. All correction of faults, when correction was permitted by the tenets of laissez-faire, must be based on what is natural to man, not on what some think he ought to become. Through such means the theoretical philosophy was able also to dismiss many other philosophical and historical theories which had attempted to create general laws through a study that encompassed only a part of man's experience and nature.

The theoretical interpretation had a considerable impact on historical interpretation in the eighteenth and later centuries, and this impact can be traced especially in the works of William Robertson. It is apparent, certainly, that Robertson had accepted the theoretical correlation of property and power, and believed too that man's nature was limited through the misuse or lack of property,

even if he did not always explain the actions of men in terms of 'moral sentiments' as Smith did. Yet although we can trace in his writings some interest in the idea of stadial growth and in the relationship between man's nature and institutions, the greater part of his work shows the application of the theoretical principles to particular historical situations, and uses these principles to challenge much of the earlier, more ideological, writing.

Like all theoretical writers, Robertson is generally concerned to demonstrate that all developments of men that are seen to be beneficial are not produced intentionally or consciously but are a product of man's nature in his situation and have effects much beyond his own time. As he, like his fellows, had seen that greater freedom developed when land or means of subsistence was distributed more equally, so he also believed that balance between nations resulted from interest and not from generosity or benevolence. Much of his work Charles V, then, is devoted to studying the development of the concept of balance of power in Europe in the sixteenth century, and of indicating how much such a concept was a result of necessity of situation and not of any great disinterested wisdom or the plan of any individual. Since the power of property was the major factor in determining form of rule, the awareness by men that their ends were best served by some regulation of property led them to forego their immediate interest, and thus produced or helped to produce a stability which was of considerable benefit. In such a thesis Robertson reveals clearly that ideas as such cannot become a permanent part

of any society's institutions and must always be seen as unique factors. If we are to interpret the past along general lines, he believes, we must rather see that ideas only have effect when institutionalised by property.

Such a philosophy is also the basis of part at least of his study of the Reformation, which he sees as becoming an integral part of the German society in particular only when its philosophy was supported by men of substance. Property and its power then, is a crucial element in his interpretation of societies, and this is even more so in his first work, Scotland. In this book his aim is to study many of the disputed issues of the Scottish past in light of the major principles of the theoretical philosophy, dismissing much of the fabulous and legendary as unphilosophical, and attempting to replace it with the concept that property is the basis of valid government. The unique must give way to the general, and the Scottish traditions interpreted in light of their origins. In particular, this analysis in terms of property also leads Robertson to make some suggestions concerning certain of the constitutional problems of sixteenth-century Scotland. By a comprehensive study he establishes that it is the nobility which possesses the greater part of the land and influence, and the government is thus predominantly aristocratical. This being so, he believes, our assessment of the validity of actions against Queen Mary, for example, must depend in part at least on the degree to which she can be seen as having attempted to usurp powers that the property situation did not grant to the monarchy. This interpretation, he felt, would at least give more gen-

eral explanations for many disputed matters.

Such theories seem philosophical and theoretical, but there are also instances in which the non-philosophical approach is evident and forms an integral part of Robertson's interpretation. This is particularly so in his study of the Reformation. While his assessment of the role of the providential in the history of man is generally influenced by his belief in the existence of general physical laws, he also suggests a manipulation by God of human affairs when such affairs concern the advancement of 'true' religion. Certain matters, he appears to think, are so important and so necessary that the actual coming together of the events producing or encouraging these is directed by providence. Although Robertson also emphasises that all ideas must be institutionalised in property, and although he also explains the events preceding the Reformation entirely within the theoretical laws and the idea of property and power, the role which he gives to the providential does distinguish his work from the general approach of this school.

We may further see in his remarks on government that he does not always appear to believe - as Smith and Millar do - that men can only act as their situation permits. He examines the various elements which comprise the major forms of government - democracy, monarchy, aristocracy - and sees in all three distinctive faults which, though produced by situation, also seem to be permanent characteristics. If man is to develop a system of rule that will bring greater benefits, if he is to maintain traditional 'virtues' in the midst of political morality, then, Robertson believes, these

distinctive faults must be curbed. This, he suggests, can be done by the imposing of restraints from above - as far as the democracy or popular element is concerned - or by creating a sense of office or pride in rank for the other two classes.

Some of Robertson's statements concerning government and morality, then, though based on the belief that property division will determine the nature of rule, also appear to imply that men must go beyond the 'justice' or laws of any society to act through 'benevolence'. This is very much the case when he judges earlier, much more unsettled and violent ages, by the 'timeless' and 'immutable' principles of morality that seem to have been produced by his own age, and which certainly formed little part of the attitudes of men in those ages he discusses. Thus, by applying the ideas of a more philosophical era to less perfect stages, by stating that men should have acted by these same principles, by attempting to judge men in the light of theories of 'virtue' quite foreign to them, he detracts considerably from the force of the theoretical argument, and introduces elements which make part of his work similar to that of the unphilosophical writers he soundly condemned.

This unphilosophical interpretation is also to be seen to a considerable degree in Robertson's first work, Scotland. On the one hand, he seems to adhere to the laws of theoretical history, to the standards of investigation developed by the theoretical school. He makes a considerable effort to relate the major events of the sixteenth century to the ideas of property and power, and to discredit the more ro-

mantic theories of earlier Scottish writers. He shows the distribution of political power in the nation, and reveals at some length the characteristics which such a distribution of property produces: violence, discord, lack of respect for the laws, constant attempts by the nobility to increase its power - factors which are all very natural but which are also unphilosophical in that they inhibit the development of men and of a more perfect form of government. Such qualities, Robertson also shows, must be recognised not only as destructive but simply as reflecting the spirit of the age; they are not values or virtues which should be maintained in all subsequent ages, as earlier writers had implied.

But on the other hand, Robertson's prejudices - against corrupted monarchs, in favour of the Reformation principles - lead him also to present another interpretation of the warlike nobility in this same work. To some extent he does still continue his use of the theoretical concepts in this interpretation, in that he attempts to relate the actions of Queen Mary, and those of the nobility, to the various rights and property which both possessed; yet he also consistently misuses his sources so as to give a distorted impression of the Queen's actions, and is sufficiently vague and imprecise about the nobility and its motives as to suggest that its character is not violent and destructive, but unselfish and beneficial. He depends to a considerable extent on works - such as those of Buchanan - which are extremely biased against the Queen, while stating, in the Dissertation especially, that he is not inter-

ested in making judgments, only in presenting the evidence which will permit the reader to make his own conclusions. Most importantly, his belief that the Reformation had introduced new principles - 'republican' in nature - into the society, which affected the attitudes of the confederate nobility in particular, may be the means by which he seeks to explain the apparent discrepancies between his interpretations of the aristocracy. But he presents no evidence to support his contention that new principles have made the lords more philosophical. While he points out that the nobility, especially the confederate lords, consistently act to maintain 'national' liberties and are otherwise to be seen demonstrating some rather sophisticated beliefs, he fails to make clear that the division of property is such that the 'nation' is little other than the aristocracy, and that the 'national liberties' are rarely more than the prerogatives of the nobles. The contrast which he continually seeks to make between the actions of Queen Mary and those of the nobility is thus based on a very unphilosophical manipulation of material, and does no more than present the old anti-Marian interpretation in a somewhat more 'scientific' guise.

The existence of two concurrent philosophies, or two different sets of influences in one body of work, must necessarily detract from the impact of both; and it is likely that the force of the theoretical ideas in Robertson's writings was considerably undermined by his emphasis on the more traditional moral virtues, on the providential, by his bias and misuse of material. We cannot deny that Robertson

is a theoretical historian, or at least makes use of the theoretical ideas; but he also has other loyalties which prevent him from making any major contribution to the development of the theoretical philosophy.

SECTION I

CHAPTER ONE

THE ELEMENTS OF PHILOSOPHICAL HISTORY

In one sense all history is philosophical in that it is based on a particular attitude concerning the past, present, or future[1]. The meaning of the word 'philosophical' as applied to eighteenth-century historical writing, however, is somewhat more specialised. The philosophical history of the Enlightenment is a study of what are seen as the meaningful factors in human development, a search for the factors which make for the emergence of freedom of mind, an attempt to ascertain the causes of qualitative change in man's social structure. In essence, this form of history examines human institutions in an effort to reveal the spirit of man in its journey through historical time, yet it goes beyond earlier institutional studies where, although the relationship between men and their laws was stressed, there was always an emphasis on the individuality of each society[2]. The philosophical history, in contrast, is much more cosmopolitan, less provincial, more concerned with the universal, with the regular and uniform rather than with the unique. Historical writing to the philosophically inclined did not mean the study of one society or nation from a viewpoint centred within that country's past, for however interesting such inquiry was, it was nonetheless fragmented and disjointed: it revealed

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1. See, for instance, Frank E. Manuel, Shapes of Philosophical History (Stanford, 1965).
2. See especially George Huppert, The Idea of Perfect History (Urbana, 1970), Donald R. Kelley, Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship (New York, 1970), and J. G. A. Pocock, The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law (Cambridge, 1957).

only the actions of men over a limited period of time and did not seek to establish those general patterns which helped to form a science of humanity. The philosophical historian must be concerned with the universal, must study general history which 'embraces the consideration of the successive progressions of the human race and of the detail of the causes that have contributed to them'[1].

This dislike of the particular and the isolated in the philosophical attitude is not confined to the span of historical investigation. The new history seeks not only to reject restricted concepts of time but also to deny the validity of studies which present fragments of the past as the whole because of the limitation of their sources to the traditional annals and chronicles[2]. Such works merely continued the older concept of history as a detailing of the actions of rulers, a listing of kings, battles and treaties, and failed to consider the possibility of the importance of factors other than the political. Not only must the philosophical writer extend the scope of his field of study to many ages and many nations, but he must study human society, must concentrate on the actions and achievements of men in general; universal history embraces not only 'the origin, the revolutions of governments' but also 'the progress of languages, of physics, of morals, manners, of sciences and arts'[3]. History en philosophe, then, is in essence social history, a study of human institutions, laws, customs, in-

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1. Turgot, Notes on Universal History, in W. Walker Stephens (ed.) The Life and Writings of Turgot (London, 1895, hereafter cited Life) p. 175.
2. See, for instance, Quesnai, quoted in Ronald L. Meek, The Economics of Physiocracy (Cambridge, Mass., 1963)p.66.
3. Turgot, Notes on Universal History, Life, p. 175.

ventions, commerce, arts, sciences and philosophies, which reveals the social as opposed to the individual achievement, which indicates the causes of human advance and of the emergence of a gentler, more humane society in which the public benefit, rather than the ruler's glory, predominates. By such standards much earlier work must be rejected as being superficial, as Voltaire's criticism of Daniel, for instance, indicates: 'Il devait m'apprendre les droits de la nation, les droits des principaux corps de cette nation, ses lois, ses usages, ses moeurs, et comment ils ont changé'[1]. The philosophical historian does not reject political annals, court gossip or military achievements, but he incorporates such material into his synthesis rather than seeing it as the only acceptable form of history; his scope is wide, his examination more profound than the traditional, because he is interested not in the few but in the many[2].

History en philosophe, then, was a conscious break with older traditions of historical writing, seeking as it did to expand the scope of historical investigation and sources, to establish the general social achievements of man. It also breaks with this tradition in that the philosophical historian

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1. Voltaire, Dictionnaire Philosophique (hereafter cited Dictionnaire) in Oeuvres Complètes (Paris, 1878) XIX, p.365; see also his La Philosophie de l'Histoire (ed. J.H. Brumfitt, SV, XXVIII, 1963, hereafter cited Philos.de l'Hist.) p. 87. Useful secondary sources on the nature of philosophical history include Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of the Enlightenment (Boston, 1955), Paul Hazard, European Thought in the Eighteenth Century (Harmondsworth, 1965), Peter Gay, The Enlightenment (New York, 1967, 1969), René Hubert, Les Sciences Sociales dans l'Encyclopedie (Paris, 1923), Friedrich Meinecke, Historism (London, 1971) and Ira O. Wade, Intellectual Origins of the French Enlightenment (Princeton, 1971).
2. See Hume, 'Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences' in Essays Moral, Political and Literary (London, 1963, hereafter cited Essays) p. 115.

is not content merely to list events, to suggest that what had occurred can be safely relegated to a dusty tome; on the contrary, he sees it as an integral part of the philosophical approach to comment, to analyse, to point out how the general social forces about which he is writing have emerged with difficulty and are constantly threatened by those 'un-philosophical' factors which have previously limited the growth of man's mind. Hence, the philosophical interpretation is based on an attitude or spirit fundamental to the every-day life of its practitioners, a spirit which was reflective and critical and devoted to the continuation and preservation of those values produced by general human development - toleration, 'moderation', 'justice', 'rights'for all[1] - a spirit which is an active and aggressive one: 'It will remain the philosopher's duty', Diderot wrote, 'to preach the truth, to sustain it, to promote it, and to illustrate it'[2]. The new historian makes the past live, because it is the past which reveals to him what man's needs are in the present; so that, far from simply listing dry facts, he seeks to distil from his material a living theory of human nature, to ascertain what men need from their societies in order to be fully themselves. Anti-pyrrhonist, furthermore, he reserves his scepticism for the criticism of earlier historical works, for those philosophies which have failed to really observe

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1. There are some variations, however, in the nature of this 'philosophical' spirit - see Appendix A.
2. Quoted in Gay, The Enlightenment (New York, 1967) I, p. 129.

man as he is in society[1]. He does not deny the values of informed and intelligent observation, he does deny that man can know nothing of his past, can learn nothing from the study of his own and earlier societies, is unable even to be sure of what he 'knows'. Indeed, on the contrary, he believes that truly 'philosophical' - informed, 'detached', 'scientific' - observation is the basis of those theories of human nature which are in fact the very essence of the philosophical history: 'as the science of man is the only solid foundation for the other sciences, so the only solid foundation we can give to this science itself must be laid on experience and observation'[2]. As well as discarding the obsolete concepts concerning the nature and scope of history, therefore, the modern historian must also discard those philosophies which throw doubt on the possibility of knowledge itself, and must substitute a 'scientific' evaluation, must depend on his awareness of an observed continuity of human experience. 'We must therefore glean up our experiments in this science from a cautious observation of human life', Hume declared:

> 'and take them as they appear in the common course of the world, by men's behaviour in company, in affairs, and in their pleasures. Where experiments of this kind are judiciously collected and compared, we may hope to establish on them a science, which will not be inferior in certainty, and will be much superior in utility to any other of human comprehension.' 3

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1. Richard Popkin, 'Scepticism in the Enlightenment', SV, XXVI (1963) pp. 1321-1345; see also Popkin and David Fate Norton (eds.) David Hume:Philosophical Historian (New York, 1965) pp. ix-xxxi.
2. Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature (Oxford, 1888, hereafter cited Treatise) Introduction, p. xx.
3. Hume, Treatise, Introduction, p. xxiii.

The new history, in short, is wholly concerned with man and with his experience.

Philosophical history, therefore, actively challenges the traditional and the customary, and does so through what it sees as a detached and realistic evaluation untainted by obscurity, by a dependence on older and more limited forms of thought. Its observation of man, of his social institutions, together with its belief in the repressive effects of certain types of institution as revealed by such observation, is given practical expression by the challenge issued to those political and religious doctrines considered inimical to true human development. In such challenges the critical spirit of the philosopher was given an added strength by the long-established traditions of radical religious and political thought which provided both method of attack and the illustration of the limitations imposed by a superstitious and uncritical acceptance of what was[1]. In the battle for the freedom of the human mind, and for a 'moderate' society in which men were governed by 'just' laws, and were no longer at the whim of tyrannous and 'unphilosophical' superiors, it was seen to be of major importance to reveal the basis and development of institutions so that their unphilosophical foundations and spirit were obvious; and in this undertaking the established 'radical' philosophies served the new philosophical spirit very well.

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1. See especially H. T. Mason, Pierre Bayle and Voltaire (Oxford, 1963), Norman L. Torrey, Voltaire and the English Deists (New Haven, 1930), Ira O. Wade, The Clandestine Organization and Diffusion of Philosophic Ideas in France From 1700 to 1750 (New York, 1967).

The widening of the scope of historical inquiry was of considerable importance in this undertaking, particularly with regard to religious criticism; and the attempt to challenge the dominant influence of Christianity gained strength from the philosophical effort to consider the history and institutions of all mankind, to show that all religions were a product of their society, that 'morality' was not a prerogative of one religion but was produced by every form of society and must be considered from this viewpoint - an attitude which is seen especially in Voltaire's La Philosophie de l'Histoire. Furthermore, although there was some effort to establish that unintended benefits had resulted from the actions of the established Church[1], most writers sought to point out that its faults were inimical to human growth and to the development of freedom of thought[2]. Christianity was merely one religion among many and, if its origins had been pure - and not all agreed with this, attempting to reveal the pagan and unpure elements in its makeup - it had nonetheless lost this original purity, its development and strength being linked to political changes in society. The Church had become,in effect, a political institution, made great by possession of land and the power resulting from this, a greatness augmented by tradition, supported by rulers unaware of their duties to their state,

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1. Robertson, The History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V (hereafter cited Charles V) in Works (Edinburgh, 1813) V, pp. 39, 54-55.
2. See, for instance, Voltaire, Dictionnaire, articles "Lois civiles et ecclésiastiques', 'Papisme', 'Prêtres', in Oeuvres Complètes, XIX, pp. 625-626, XX, pp. 166, 272-273.

and unable either to make religion a part of the state's policy[1], or to separate church and state entirely. Some writers, such as Robertson, were philosophical while remaining within the Christian tradition[2], and saw pagan belief and Catholic doctrine as equally inimical, equally against the spirit of true religion[3]; it was not to the principles of Catholicism, he felt, that men owed their freedom from servitude in feudal Europe[4], nor can we see sophisticated religious belief in the first primitive expressions of worship: 'men, in their savage state, pass their days like the animals around them, without the knowledge or veneration of any superior power.'[5] Others, particularly many of the French authors, were sceptical of any religion based on dogma, on authoritarianism, on a separation of beliefs into those suitable for the mass and those appropriate for the more intellectual; and while the desire to challenge the Europeocentric viewpoint led them to accept the peculiarities of other religions, they were in general convinced

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1. Montesquieu, The Spirit of the Laws (ed. Franz Neumann, New York, 1949, hereafter cited SL) II, pp. 27-37.
2. Such a position is not unusual, particularly given the diversity of thought among those whom we might consider as 'philosophical' because of their challenge to established and privileged authoritarianism: see, for instance, Bernard Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge, Mass., 1967) and Hazard, op. cit., Part I, Chapter 4. It does create some problems, however, particularly as regards the maintenance of a philosophical causal theory: see below, Chapter V.
3. See below, pp. 181, 188, 191-192, 266, 507.
4. Charles V, Works, V, p. 500 (Note XX).
5. Robertson, The History of America (hereafter cited America) Works, III, p. 331.

that 'true' religion could only be Deistic[1]. Biblical criticism had made them sceptical of human interpolations, scientific observation had made them wary of the claims made by men for intervention and revelation on which so much dogma was based - a wariness, indeed, which is not peculiar to those who refuse to accept either old or new Christianity, for the principles of science were used also by the 'scientific' Christians[2].

Although there is some difference of opinion concerning the constitution of 'true' religion, then, the philosophical writers are nonetheless equally convinced that it must be based on the principles of natural science, that it must conform to the regular and constant laws which observation has made apparent. It was the aim of 'Philosophy' 'to allay that wonder, which either the unusual or the seemingly disjointed appearances of nature excite'[3], and the study of astronomy and physics revealed that active intervention by God in human affairs was a concept which must either be denied or else very carefully qualified. 'Le monde est arrangé suivant des lois mathématiques', declared Voltaire, and such laws, which established the presence of 'une intelligence', could not be invaded, even by God himself[4]. Other writers, if more reluctant to deny that intervention

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1. See, for instance, Hazard, op. cit., Part II, Chapter I, Mason, op. cit., Torrey, op. cit., See also W. H. Barber, 'Voltaire and Quakerism: Enlightenment and the inner light', SV, XXIV (1963) pp. 81-109.
2. Hazard, op. cit., Part I, Chapter 5, Part II, Chapter I.
3. Smith, Essays on Philosophical Subjects (hereafter cited Essays) in The Early Writings of Adam Smith (ed. J. Ralph Lindgren, New York, 1967) p. 75.
4. Quoted in J. H. Brumfitt, Voltaire Historian (Oxford, 1970) p. 121. See also Voltaire, Philos. de l'Hist., pp. 188-190.

had ever taken place, were nonetheless convinced that it was now no longer necessary - God, one radical writer had stated, 'has already discovered his Mind to Men and made his Meaning manifest'[1]. In the philosophical history, the Supreme Being is limited to first cause[2], and, having established set laws and regular patterns for the operation of the material world, He no longer has an active, revelatory role to play. Providence as causal explanation, then, must be severely if not wholly limited, and interpretations which attempt to explain the unusual as an expression of divine action are seen as evidence of an unphilosophical age when men were ignorant of those general laws and series of causes that modern man has been privileged to discover[3]. The particular cannot be explained in a manner which ignores these general and all-embracing laws.

As traditional religions and the unscientific type of 'fact' on which these were based were under constant attack by the philosophical historians particularly because they continued the limitations of earlier thoughts, so also were authoritarian political theories and forms of government criticised for their emphasis on 'privilege' and on a continued limitation of 'rights'. This is not to say that there is necessarily any uniformity in the philosophical attack, for varying types of government elicited varying reactions and differing demands for reform. In some works,

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1. The Independent Whig, No. IX, in David L. Jacobson (ed.) The English Libertarian Heritage (New York, 1965) p. 20.
2. See below, pp. 175-176. See also Hazard, op. cit., Part II, Chapter I.
3. Robertson, Charles V, Works, V, pp. 39, 43-44.

particularly in the earlier English radical tradition, there is a greater emphasis on the natural quality of men: 'Whoever pretends to be naturally superior to other Men', stated 'Cato', 'claims from Nature what she never gave to any Man'[1], and such a philosophy led to a demand for greater public participation in government, greater emphasis on the capacity of the ordinary man for a share in political life[2]. In others, especially where the commonwealth influence is strong, philosophical challenge to traditional forms of government is expressed in the controversy concerning the mixed state and the benefits which this may bring[3]. For still others, even though it was accepted that we must often depend on influential and important men where the social structure has established the power of these, there is nonetheless an awareness that it was the historian's duty to point out the dangers of such a system, to indicate that though individual rule could be acceptable and even good[4], it must be directed towards the general social benefit. Though the various authors whom we could describe as philosophical found many types of government to be acceptable, they nonetheless share a common preoccupation. They are concerned that man become more free to be himself rather than be limited by circumstances created or maintained by authoritarianism. If they do not all demand a greater active share in the operations of political life, they

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1. Cato's Letters, No. 45, in Jacobson, op. cit., p. 103.
2. Ibid., No. 24, p. 61.
3. See, for instance, Bailyn, op. cit.
4. See below, pp. 27-33.

nonetheless demand a social awareness from those who do possess political authority. Their concerns, therefore, are not utopian or wholly unrealistic; they are able to accept imperfections and discrepancies, they do not expect the end of all injustice, but they do believe that it is possible for the benefits of government to be directed towards the many and not the few. As always, the philosophical writers are concerned with the needs of the many, of the growth of men in general; and, if the study of the past revealed that men search for regularity and order[1], then it was clearly the concern of the philosophic writer to point this out, to establish clearly that nations remain in disorder until 'good' laws are securely established.

The theoretical historians, if more concerned to relate 'equity' and 'justice' to the particular economic level of any society, rather than to indicate that such concepts can be absolutes, nonetheless also support the general philosophical attitude concerning government and its ends; and many of the philosophical values are incorporated into the theoretical 'natural course of things'[2], those factors which are necessary if man's nature is to develop properly. The right to work, to retain the fruits of one's labour, the creation of a more equal distribution of taxes, the reform of law, the full and proper operation of the specifically human qualities, the institutionof general, not individual, rights, are the demands of a wide variety of writers who

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1. Voltaire, Recapitulation of Essay, in Works (Paris, London, 1901) XXX, p. 141.
2. See below, pp. 37-39.

shared the basic philosophical values. The acceptance of a diversity of talents, distinction of ranks, variations in wealth - 'where would society be if every man laboured only at his own little field'[1] - can hardly be taken as an acceptance of an inequality before the law. Government must seek to end repression of thought, must end torture as a legal weapon[2], must break away from the interference of the church in social and political affairs[3]; and even while we can see that each society produces only those laws which it can afford, this fact does not invalidate our observations that only particular sorts of social institutions lead to the development and maintenance of the best aspects of man's nature[4]. Whatever sort of government we support, then, it must be one which is aware of these philosophical principles; for the continuation of repressive, limited rule, devoted to special interests, is a form of government which is against the spirit of the age.

The aim of philosophical history, then, is particularly to break down the effect and power of the traditional when tradition is seen to be detrimental to man's development, and to establish also a continuity between past and present by revealing the effects of the former on the latter. Yet this aim cannot really be said to have been fulfilled in the works of a philosophical historian such as Voltaire, because

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1. Turgot, Life, p. 195; see also below, Chapter III.
2. See particularly Marcello T. Maestro, Voltaire and Beccaria as Reformers of Criminal Law (New York, 1942) and Peter Gay, Voltaire's Politics (Princeton, 1959).
3. Ibid., passim.
4. See especially Chapter IV below.

his capacity for finding such continuity is affected by his lack of a synthesising thesis, by the continuation in his work (and in that of many other of the philosophes) of the traditional historical fragmentation and periodisation, and by a tendency to separate the past into philosophical and unphilosophical ages. Such characteristics mean that one's understanding of the past, and, hence, one's ability to see it reflected in the present, is rather limited. This fact, indeed, is a major distinguishing factor between the French and the Scottish philosophical history, for, apart from the Physiocrats, the only major French writer who is concerned with man as he has been observed, and not as he 'ought' to be, who explains man's past in terms of regular and primarily 'moral'[1] factors, is Montesquieu.

Montesquieu's two major works, Spirit of the Laws[2] and Considerations[3] are of particular importance in the development of philosophical history - especially that form of it employed by the theoretical writers[4] - because they connect the present of any society to its past in very general terms, and because they trace the extent to which physical situation determines forms of government, forms, which in general are believed to possess constant or regular features. There is not in Montesquieu's work any developed theory of the constant relationship of the parts of any society to its whole, this concept being at the most implicit and certainly not

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1. 'Moral' here means 'social' or 'human' institutions, which are to be distinguished from physical causes.
2. See above, p. 6, note 3.
3. Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline (trans. David Lowenthal, New York, 1965, hereafter cited Considerations).
4. See below, Appendix B, pp. 518-525.

traced in any detail. There is, however, a suggestion that all of a society's past helps to form its present nature, and that the physical causes which predominate in the early history of a state have a profound effect on those social institutions which are later the main determinants of human behaviour. Thus, while we cannot state that Montesquieu established a synthesis of the past through revealing constant laws which affect all human action, it is true that he does show that all laws and institutions are a reflection of situation, or physical factors. This is a vital element in the development of a philosophy which sought to show the unity between past and present, and Montesquieu was recognised by the Scottish writers as very much a philosophical author[1].

The philosophical desire to establish regularity and uniformity in human history was only to be more thoroughly developed by the theoretical philosophy which is able to give a more profound meaning to the concept of 'philosophical' history by its greater capacity for understanding the past in its own terms. While it is true that the Scottish school does not necessarily find the whole of the past acceptable, per se, true too that its greater capacity for relative assessment barely hides a dislike of the unphilosophical elements of other times, the theoretical historians' employment of all historical facts as meaningful and revealing is

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1. See, for instance, Robertson, Charles V, Works, V, p. 515 (Note XXII): 'two talents ... distinguish that illustrious author - industry in tracing all the circumstances of ancient and obscure institutions, and sagacity in penetrating into the causes and principles which contributed to establish them ...'

an integral part of their ability to connect all parts of the past into a whole. Man's nature operates on constant principles, they believed, and he retains certain vital qualities throughout his experience in time; yet, changes produced through variation in economic subsistence over the centuries meant that the more destructive elements of these qualities are moderated, and 'philosophical' changes come into being[1]. Human nature, then, is both constant and yet continually changing and refining itself, and all the expressions of this nature, along with the variations in economic basis which produce such changes, are historical facts, which must be taken into account in our interpretation. Most importantly, these facts permit us to see a continuity between one age and another, to relate the particular - each society - to the general - human society - to see, in short, that diversity produces uniformity[2].

Acceptance of all stages of human change, therefore, permitted the theoretical writers to accept all facts, and to relate them to general patterns; hence, the theoretical version of philosophical history does not break up the past into ages which are defined as philosophical or unphilosophical, does not attempt to present history solely as a record of beneficial eras interspersed between detrimental ones. Because of this concept of history as a stadial process, because it is able to account in economic terms for the changes that are seen to occur in man's nature, the theoretical interpretation gives a greater depth to the idea

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1. 'Philosophical' here meaning 'just','moderate' etc. See Appendix A.
2. See below, Chapters II - IV.

of institutional or social studies; and the word 'philosophical' as applied to the investigatory techniques that underly this interpretation,means also the capacity to reproduce the process of change and development in one's work so as to enable men to understand other ages, and, through this, to understand their own times. In the theoretical historian's view, to be philosophical, then, is not only to be tolerant and humane; but it also means that one is able to understand the causes of past intolerance and inhumanity as expressed in institutions, to relate these, through the conjectural process[1], to the general and major causal factor of subsistence, and thereby to produce a wholly new form of historical writing.

Voltaire's inability to find general and interrelated factors is quite in opposition to this synthesising capacity of the theoretical philosophy, and this is expressed in the fact that he cannot accept the totality of human experience and the complexity of human nature. It is true that he denies we can study the past from the point of view of theories which are not based on observation or on the close study of man in many types of social setting; his criticism of Rousseau, for instance, is based on his belief that man's having become more 'philosophical' reveals the development of his nature, not the corruption of it[2]. Yet his own view of human nature and the manner in which it changes is somewhat limited. This is not necessarily to say that this general type of philosophical history[3] considers that man's nature is wholly fixed, that he is seen to have been the

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1. See below, pp.80, note 1, 340 ff.
2. Philos. de l'Hist., p. 106.
3. That is, as distinct from the theoretical development of philosophical, or social, history.

same at all times; Voltaire himself, for example, was aware that the progress of the human mind was slow, and that many faculties apparently take time to develop and ripen, so that while he may state that man has always been the same, that all history 'c'est la même piece qui se joue tous les théâtres avec quelques changements de noms'[1], he is really only saying that passions remain constant amidst diverse situations. Nonetheless, such a thesis differs from the theoretical in that it suggests there are merely arrangements of passions which differ in order to produce variations in human history, as opposed to the theoretical belief that passions themselves are dependent on the situation of society; the latter interpretation attempts to establish cause rather than simply to note variations. Voltaire does, indeed, make an effort to bring the past within the understanding of the present by referring to constancies in human nature[2]; yet his pronouncements on this concept do not go much beyond a recognition of certain consistencies in human feeling, as well as of variations and the variety of causes which have somehow produced the alternation between good and evil in the past. It is not that there is an inability on his part to accept change which distinguishes his work from that of the theoretical historians; it is rather that his limited capacity to establish major causal factors inhibits the establishment of general causal patterns in his interpretation. He cannot go beyond the change which he does see as having occurred

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1. Theodore Besterman (ed.) Voltaire's Correspondence, XLI (Genève, 1958) p. 47.
2. Philos. de l'Hist., p. 107.

in the past in man's nature and institutions, in order to discover the constant elements in all change; he can only suggest some 'meaning' in the very alternation between superstition and the philosophical eras.

Voltaire's theories of explanation are also limited by his inability to accept that man is an extraordinary complex being - he is unable, for instance, to understand the phenomenon of Joan of Arc or the apparently contradictory behaviour of the crusaders[1] - and also his belief that each action has a direct and limited relationship with its end. To achieve good, we must have actions which are concerned with general benefit, and the past dominance in society of war, of the search for glory and the desire for heroism, coupled with an indifference to such vital factors as agricultural development, has meant the creation of a tradition which is basically non-productive -- a theme which is seen especially in Siècle de Louis XIV. If the past is basically unphilosophical, he implies, it is unlikely that the philosophical can emerge with ease, and there is little indication in his work that he sees unplanned benefits eventually emerging from actions which had an explicit and quite different end in view.

Certainly it is obvious that Voltaire's use of the idea of heterogeneity of ends[2] is limited, and, while he may show

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1. Essai sur les moeurs ... (Paris, 1963) I, pp. 566, 751-752. However, see Mason, op. cit., pp. 68-74.
2. For the theoretical employment of this concept, see below, Chapter II.

some tendencies towards using this concept as a causal factor[1], the very isolation of such instances indicates that the theory of cumulative and unintended effects is not an integral part of his theory of change[2]. The concatenation of events which he sometimes uses as an explanatory factor is never extended to the degree which the theoretical historians employed, nor does Voltaire have any concept of economic and social 'laws' of development which permit the theoretical idea of heterogeneity to be used to show that pattern rather than chance is a basic element in human history. If Voltaire sees that particular factors must occur before there is change - even though this change may be simply the expression of a hitherto dormant 'national spirit' - the special rather than the general causes emphasised in such change means that chance itself is of considerable importance, and the emergence of active and beneficial individuals appears very much dependent on 'accident'. There is no means in Voltaire's theory, by which progress, or advance towards a philosophical society, can be explained in regular or con-

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1. See Siècle de Louis XIV (hereafter cited Siècle) Chapter XXXVI, in Oeuvres Historiques (Paris, 1957) p. 1005. See also Voltaire's Lettres sur les Anglais (Cambridge, 1961) No. 9, 'Sur le gouvernement': 'la liberté est née en Angleterre des querelles des tyrans; les barons forcerent Jean sans Terre et Henri III à accorder cette fameuse charte, dont le principal bût était a la vérité de mettre les rois dans la dependence des lords mais dans laquelle la reste de la nation fut un peu favorise, afin que dans l'occasion elle se rangéât du parti de ses pretendus protecteurs. Cette grande charte, qui est regardée comme l'origine sacrée de libertes anglaises, fait bien voir elle meme combien peu la liberté était connue.'
2. See Paul Sakman, 'The Problems of Historical Method and of Philosophy of History' in Voltaire', History and Theory Beiheft II (1971) p. 40.

sistent terms. If the necessary causes are missing or are interfered with, if there are no prominent individuals, there is little possibility of change or of explaining the causes of any change which does in fact occur.

Voltaire's search for the philosophical or useful truths in prior ages did lead to an emphasis on the importance of studying all types of societies, all types of institutions, yet it also meant a denial of much of what he discovered. The sole factor uniting past and present in his work is the idea of progress, the advance of the beneficial, and this unity is precarious when the search for the philosophical tends to separate past facts into two groups. The theoretical suggestion of laws of similar stages of growth, of similar progress of societies at different moments in time[1], is not an integral part of Voltaire's work and only rarely does he indicate a belief in such universal laws or truths. Hence, while he may be said to search for laws in the past, he does not find these to exist in any positive sense. Man only learns from the past how much the unphilosophical has dominated, and how much it is necessary to break down religious and political repression before society can become free. There is no understanding in his histories of the ways in which such ideology and beliefs can be seen as an expression of human nature, as related to the economic situation of man, as a necessary part of the growth towards the emergence of the philosophical itself.

While some French writers were able to accept all of the

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1. See below, Chapter III.

past, even accepting, as Turgot did, the need to distinguish between the rigid and repetitive patterns typical of nature and the laws that are seen in human society, this approach is not typical of the sort of philosophical history which Voltaire wrote. When there is no constant reference to property as a basis of change, there is a greater dependence on seeing a relationship between cause and discernible effect, on revealing correlation between good actions and beneficial ends: the absence of general and unintended causes precludes the emergence of a theory of unplanned and widespread development. Hence, although there is some indication in Essai sur les Moeurs that trade and manufactures are important to the development of freedom of thought and action, and although the actual progress of these is seen as instinctive rather than conscious, Voltaire cannot really go much beyond this.[1] The continuation of such beneficial factors in times of chaos is not explained through any theories as to the nature of man or the strength of the trading instinct[2].

Furthermore, while there is some suggestion in Voltaire's work that commerce and changes in the division of land, for instance, are productive of a spirit of liberty, such factors are not a part of any all-embracing theory as in the theoretical philosophy; the connection between the possession of land or the development of trade, and the emergence of political freedom, is only lightly indicated. Material factors are not seen as leading to changes in human nature or to other,

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1. Essay on Manners (hereafter cited Essay) in Works (Paris, 1901) XXVI, p. 42.
2. Essay, Works, XXVI, pp. 42-65; see also Sakmann, op. cit., p. 40.

unplanned, changes at a later stage of man's history. There is a suggestion that the arts and a certain 'human' spirit, the capacity to survive and to prosper are important in the renewal and continuation of life[1]; and Voltaire also suggests that industry is useful in the development of the philosophical society. But this is not the same as saying that there is a continued interaction between the development of commerce and the emergence of a free society, which is the theoretical position, and one developed in great detail. Thus, the association of wealth and liberty in Voltaire's remarks on the flowering of genius in Italy - merely one of the many suggestions which were to be examined more fully by the theoretical school - is tantalisingly abrupt; in addition, it suggests again that Voltaire's work is one which, however liberal in interesting speculation, is devoid of a basic, interconnecting theory. Although we must be careful, therefore, not to over-emphasise the importance of conscious rational action as causal element in this early type of philosophical writing, it is true to say that explanations of change in work such as Voltaire's are primarily intellectual in nature; as such they differ further from the theoretical which is concerned to show that the intellectual is dependent on the social subsistence level, that planned and conscious action is both limited in its intended effect, and is also an effect rather than a cause of the society in which it is expressed[2].

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1. 'Thoughts on the Panorama of History', in Works, XXX, p. 315.
2. See below, Chapter IV.

Philosophical history of the sort that Voltaire wrote is not thereby dependent on a theory of 'accident', however; he agrees with Gibbon that history revealed 'a system, connexions and consequences, where others can discern only the caprices of fortune'[1], and that there is some pattern in life itself. Yet such agreement did not mean an adherence to a theory in which all past events could be seen as forming a united whole, and his acceptance of this philosophical principle is expressed primarily in the belief that we must interpret the past in a secular, anti-providential, anti-accident fashion. He believed that all events had a cause and are connected in at least broad terms, that nothing is accidental in the sense of being without cause - 'rien ne peut exister sans cause'[2]. But, lacking a theory by which he could trace these hidden connections of events, he was driven to interpret the past by a means which to the theoretical writers was merely another form of accident - through seeing the unphilosophical challenged by the emergence of the great man, a thesis which is a fundamental part of the concept that there is a close relationship between cause and end.

In his major historical works, therefore, it is apparent that Voltaire sees fortune has a large part to play in life eventhough this dominance of fate over man is related to the

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1. Gibbon, Essay on the Study of Literature (hereafter cited Essay) in The Miscellaneous Works of Edward Gibbon ... Illustrated ... by John, Lord Sheffield (London, 1837) p. 655.
2. Quoted in Brumfitt, Voltaire Historian, p. 121.

nature of the particular society which he is examining. In his study of the past, with its emphasis on chaos, misery, cruelty and destruction[1], he sees society to be vulnerable in proportion as beneficial laws and stability are missing. In such a thesis, which is certainly one basic to the theoretical history also, any improvements (whatever may be their cause) mean that society is less likely to be affected by the incidental and accidental. The regularity and order which stabilise the social system limit the possibility of permanent effects resulting from isolated incidents. This philosophy is by no means any explanation of the development of man, or even of the existence of the individuals who make for change, but it does at least reveal that Voltaire's interpretation of human society contains some hope for a better future if past gains are not wiped out.

Furthermore, this philosophy also stresses how much the institutions existing in a society must necessarily play some role in determining the likelihood of successful change, and Voltaire states that 'every man is formed by the age he lives in, and few are there who can rise above the manners of the times'[2]. Yet his position on the role of society in forming the individual is not wholly clear, for he remarks that men have been unable to change the system in which they live[3], but at the same time he also suggests that those

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1. See Philos. de l'Hist., p. 141, also Besterman (ed.) Voltaire's Correspondence (Genève, 1958-1961) XXXVIII, pp. 55-56, XLVI, p. 295, XLIX, p. 131, LV, p. 194, LXII, p. 116.
2. Essay, Chapter LXIX, Works, XXVI, p. 59
3. Essay, Chapter LXIX, Works, XXVI, pp. 58-59. See also Recapitulation of Essay, Works, XXX, p. 137.

prominent individuals who possess political acumen can in fact implement major innovations, often in the face of major difficulties. Hence he sees that change may often come about in part because of a social situation which permits the rise and development of a powerful individual, but that primarily it occurs through men who possess qualities that enable them to overcome many obstacles. If so, if this is really what Voltaire means, then it is clear that chance continues to play a role in the evolution of such a situation. And, although Voltaire suggests that we are to study the spirit of an age rather than the actions of individuals[1], this is mainly a warning against dependence on isolated and unconnected events[2]. Much of his causal theory, then, depends on the great men who can often form the spirit of an age itself by their own actions, an explanation of change which the theoretical history attempts to do away with[3]. They do see that the individual may have considerable importance in particular social stages, but they continually seek to connect the isolated with the general and to show the influence of past ages on the actions of any one man.

This is not to deny, however, that Voltaire does make some attempt to suggest some background in the history of both France and Russia which would explain the existence of

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1. Siècle, Oeuvres Historiques, p. 616; see also Essay, Chapter LXVIII, Works, XXVI, p. 34.
2. Sakmann, op. cit., p. 33.
3. See below, pp. 164-165.

certain powers of those individuals whom he considers most thoroughly, Louis XIV and Peter the Great. In France, the monarchy is the long-established form of government and is supported by the national spirit; and in Russia the people are easily manipulated by a powerful ruler because of the primitive state of the society and the traditional authority of the czar[1]. But it is not the existence of such institutions or power in themselves which explains the development of the philosophical society under particular individuals, for it is clear that there have been rulers in the past of both societies who have held similar authority but have nonetheless done little to benefit the state. The limits of any nation, in Voltaire's opinion, can be overcome only by those who are concerned with the positive development of the state, whether from self-interest or love of grandeur, or from more traditionally 'benevolent' motives - an absolute monarch, anxious to do good, succeeds without difficulty in everything he may undertake[2]. Thus it is the nature of the ruler which is of greatest importance, a theory which gives the individual, whether 'good' or 'bad', a great deal of influence on his society.

In Siècle particularly it is apparent that Voltaire sees that the detrimental spirit of earlier ages is closely related to the absence of a strong government, that during the Fronde, for instance, society is marked by flippancy,

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1. Histoire de Charles XII (hereafter cited Charles XII) Chapter I, in Oeuvres Historiques, pp. 70-76; see also Robertson's review of Alexander Gordon's work on Russia under Peter in Edinburgh Review, I (1755) p. 1.
2. Siècle, Chapter X, Oeuvres Historiques, p. 705.

vulgarity, treason, that this is a period of 'licence éffrénee, de troubles, d'iniquites, et même d'impiétes[1]. It is obvious, also, that as long as the society or individual in power is concerned with the pursuit of a 'glory' that does not involve a material betterment for all, this unphilosophical spirit will continue to erode those useful institutions which do actually exist[2]. It is only those who have the personality and the talents to rule firmly and to the advantage of the state, who do not permit their individual nature to intrude on the needs of the society, who can be seen as achieving a philosophical development.

That Voltaire considers Louis XIV to be of this nature is suggested not only by his endorsement of the king in all matters but also in his belief that Louis' devotion to amusements never interfered with his performance of his duties[3]. On the other hand, in clear contrast, he sees Charles XII's actions as fundamentally disadvantageous to the state and this is so because Charles truly belongs to the ranks of those who are concerned with honour and glory and not with the philosophical. The monarch who is no servant to his country is not truly a ruler and this dictum applies equally to the idealistic and the 'good' who lack the authority or qualities necessary to overcome a degraded national spirit. The involvement in war and religious controversy such as the dispute between the emperors and the

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1. Siècle, Chapter IV, Oeuvres Historiques, p. 656.
2. See Theodore Besterman, 'Voltaire, absolute monarchy and the enlightened monarch', SV, XXXII (1965) pp. 7-21; Lionel Gossman, 'Voltaire's Charles XII:history into art', SV, XXV (1963) pp. 691-720.
3. Siècle, Chapter XXV, Oeuvres Historiques, p. 908.

popes, which Voltaire considered exhaustively in the Essay, may have a seeming glory, but this is real only if our standards are based on the unphilosophical. As Voltaire traces the actions of men throughout time he finds predominant a concern for the vainglorious, and although this is not always detrimental if accompanied by other achievements, it is noticeable that those events which make for glory are also the means by which any genuine growth is itself prevented[1]. War destroys trade and commerce, inhibits the growth of industry, decimates populations, wastes great sums of money that might well have been applied to some more profitable end; religion interferes with the state's control of its citizens, upsets the flow of money within a nation, denies to the society large numbers of men and women who might otherwise be employed in more beneficial ways and, worst of all, leads to meaningless controversies which are among the most bitter form of war known to men[2]. Even war carried out during more philosophical ages such as that of Louis XIV achieves nothing, not even in material terms[3]. Peace is always better than glory, a concept which Voltaire promulgated even in his early works[4], and although he occasionally gave value to the idea of honour, this was so only when this term meant something positive, as under Louis XIV. In kings who have no real concern with the benefit of their state, honour and glory are simply the reasons given for indulging the self.

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1. 'Thoughts on the Panorama of History', Works, XXX, p. 314.
2. This is a theme to be seen in both Siècle and Charles XII.
3. Siècle, Chapter XXIX, Oeuvres Historiques, p. 978; see also Recapitulation of Essay, Works, XXX, p. 135.
4. See Charles XII, Oeuvres Historiques, p. 272; this does not mean that Voltaire expects war to end, only that it will be less destructive; see Siècle, Chapters XII, XXIX, Oeuvres Historiques, pp. 737, 977, 979.

This is to be seen particularly in the case of Charles XII, none of whose actions appear to Voltaire to have had any lasting merit, certainly none that was of benefit to Sweden. Because of this Charles is contrasted unfavourably with a ruler such as Peter the Great whom we might otherwise have thought of as a personality not likely to gain Voltaire's approval. Charles certainly has many good qualities, a strong sense of honour, rare expressions of cruelty only, an outstanding martial spirit; yet many of his virtues are so excessive and rigid that they are in effect faults, such as the totally unproductive stubbornness that led him to remain in Turkey, an action which did not even lead to individual glory; 'Ses grandes qualities, dont une seule êut pu immortaliser un autre prince, ont fait le malheur de son pays.'[1]

The importance of a solid philosophical spirit or of a tendency to act in such a manner as to bring about philosophical ends is nowhere so clearly illustrated as in the careers of both Louis XIV and Peter the Great. As we have seen above, Voltaire believes that the period prior to Louis' effective reign was one of social disorder and this is seen to lead to a situation in which the apparently unimportant or the accidental had a considerable effect[2], and gave authority to those who lacked the experience to handle it. But under the all-embracing and strong influence of the king whose personality and power combined to produce efficiency and order, the power of incompetent individuals

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1. Charles XII, Oeuvres Historiques, p. 272.
2. Siècle, Chapter V, Oeuvres Historiques, p. 657.

declined, and the effect of the unexpected was proportionately reduced. The king's individuality was everywhere apparent, from the increase in a truly martial spirit[1], to the instituting of reforms which affected every aspect of life; and if some of the success which his efforts met with was due to the basic French spirit, it is nonetheless obvious that this spirit itself could only have been regenerated and guided by a man of Louis' distinctive capacities: all these actions needed to be both thought of and carried out[2]. The national spirit could not have been awakened, the nobles could not have become aware of their duties spontaneously; and it is the king himself who initiates or manages the growth of trade, arts, the navy and finance, national buildings and the police[3], all of which are clearly beneficial to the people[4].

Such changes are themselves evidence of a true glory, which is genuinely beneficial, and this glory obviously belongs to Louis. Similarly, in Charles XII, it is Peter the Great who receives most of Voltaire's praise, and Peter alone who is believed to have been a man able to achieve a massive re-structuring of the society on philosophical principles. Because the benefit of the czar's actions is for the whole of the society, the uncouth, sometimes cruel Peter is believed to be a monarch who genuinely serves his people. Although Voltaire does not approve of the less pleasant

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1. Siècle, Chapter V, Oeuvres Historiques, p. 652 (in comparison with that of the Fronde).
2. Siècle, Chapter XXIX, Oeuvres Historiques, p. 977.
3. Ibid., Chapters XXIX-XXXII, Oeuvres Historiques, pp. 963-1018.
4. Ibid., Chapter XXIX, Oeuvres Historiques, pp. 979-980.

characteristics of this ruler, and never condones them, he finds that Peter is superior to the more gentle, more seemingly philosophical-mannered Charles: the thorough reform of his society from a barbarian to a more civilised one, the establishment of enlightened institutions, of a system of defence, of arts, the active watchfulness over the church and the limitations imposed on it[1], are the actions of a servant of the people. Even Peter's involvement in war, an institution which Voltaire generally disapproves of, is seen to bring some benefit to the state, unlike the unproductive battles of Charles[2].

This is not indeed to suggest that Voltaire sees the evolution of philosophical society to depend predominantly on a lack of self-interest, or on important individuals possessing 'goodness'. Although his use of theories of self-interest is very limited in comparison with the theoretical history, it is nonetheless obvious that he sees political virtu or skill as necessary and as an integral part of the philosophical society, and also finds that goodness itself is often unproductive. He is thus able to make a clear distinction between those who rule and the means which they can and do use, and the morality of the ordinary citizen. Enlightened ends, he feels, are not necessarily brought about by, or dependent on, those who are themselves philosophical: we must always distinguish between the monarch as a human being, and his actions as a ruler of men. Thus he is able to

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1. Charles XII, Oeuvres Historiques, pp. 68-77, 125-126,245.
2. Ibid., Oeuvres Historiques, p. 245.

both criticise Peter the Great for some of his actions, yet also to see that his statecraft was generally beneficial; although he remained savage in the midst of his attempts to civilise his people[1], he is nonetheless entitled to a place alongside other rulers who have achieved much for their societies in the manner which was best suited to this[2]. Voltaire indeed wishes that men were different, that they were less prone to violence and superstition, yet he agrees with the position of Machiavelli that we must deal with what is, and establish standards that are in accordance with this. To do so, indeed, is an integral part of the philosophical history.

But at the same time it still remains true that Voltaire's dependence on the individual as explanation for qualitative change in society meant that his version of philosophical history differs substantially from that of the theoretical school. We must distinguish, then, between an acceptance of the philosophical values and of the study of the past through an examination of social institutions, and the particular interpretations and conclusions which separate Voltaire's work from that of the theoretical writers. In one sense, indeed, both are writing philosophical history of a similar nature; yet, as will be shown in the following chapters, the

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1. Charles XII, Oeuvres Historiques, p. 76.
2. See, for instance, Voltaire's assessment of William III and Leopold of Lorraine (Siècle, Chapter XVII, Oeuvres Historiques, pp. 790-791,808; and of the Duke of Burgundy (Siècle, Chapter XXI, Oeuvres Historiques, p. 852.

theoretical usage of ideas which Voltaire suggested goes far beyond the possibilities of philosophical history as seen and written by him. The Scottish works have a depth which is peculiar to themselves.

This is not to deny that in the French philosophical writing there is some attempt to relate the general and the particular; such efforts can be seen particularly in the belief that providence must be dismissed as a causal factor, in the attempts made to relate specific events to what was known to be regular and constant. Yet at the same time it is undeniable that in much of the French writing there is none of the more profound and detailed study of the past that we see in the theoretical work and little of the intricate connecting of particular facts to general principles of investigation which results from the belief in the dominance ofeconomic factors in human life and progress. With the notable exception of the Physiocratic school, there is no awareness of the concept of stages of development which relates each aspect of the past to a theory of constant human response and to patterns of economic development, thereby uniting the apparently isolated. The French philosophical writers were doubtless influenced by modern ideas of science, by the concept of regular laws, yet there seems to be no profound influence of these on the actual historical writing they produced. In the theoretical work, on the other hand, there is a synthesis of the part and the whole, of the past and the present greater than that which Voltaire could have hoped to accomplish through his more fragmented view; and it is this synthesis which enables theoretical history to accept the totality of human experience and to explain all

of it in terms of general and universal laws.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL HISTORY I - THE OPERATION OF HUMAN NATURE

The general philosophical interpretation of the past, however much it attempted to make man the centre of historical investigation, was nonetheless unsuccessful in this aim through its inability to provide an explanation of the means by which man gained control of life. Its emphasis on the role of the unexpected and of the individual in particular, its explicit connecting of acts and ends, its lack of a theory of progress or of an interpretation of man's nature which accounted for consistent advance given certain broad conditions, meant that it still retained some aspects of older philosophies in which the uncertain dominated. It is this particular aspect of the general philosophical writing which the theoretical historians appear to have overcome, and this because of the two major tenets of their philosophy, the inherent capacity of man to progress, and the process of the heterogeneity of ends[1].

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1. Some suggestions have been made as to the particularly Scottish background of the theoretical history's philosophical basis, and though these suggestions do not explain the development of similar work elsewhere - such as that of Turgot - it is possible that the mingling of disciplines in Scottish education, and the contrast of highland and lowland societies, for instance, may have provided an impetus to comparative studies. See, in general, Duncan Forbes, ' "Scientific" Whiggism: Adam Smith and John Millar', Cambridge Journal, VII (1954) pp. 643-670; A. L. Macfie, 'The Scottish Tradition in Economic Thought', in his The Individual in Society (London, 1967) pp. 19-41; Ronald L. Meek, 'The Scottish Contribution to Marxist Sociology', in his Economics and Ideology and Other Essays (London, 1967)

'One of the most remarkable differences between man and the other animals', Millar wrote:

> 'consists in that wonderful capacity for the improvement of his faculties with which he is endowed. Never satisfied with any particular attainment, he is continually impelled by his desires from the pursuit of one object to that of another; and his activity is called forth in the prosecution of the several arts which render his situation more easy and agreeable.' 1

These qualities, which are always expressed in economic terms, and, through this, in particular social achievements, are supplemented and aided by the process of heterogeneity by which particular actions with limited intended ends are believed to achieve also far greater and more profound unintended results. Man's acting as freely as possible in his own interest, which is naturally the manner in which he acts, and expressing his actions in economic terms, automatically produces certain beneficial relationships. Any interference with man's freedoms, with his ordinary advancement of the self, will result in a corresponding limitation of economic and social development - slavery and monopoly, for instance, always interfere with ordinary economic returns from land and industry[2]. When he is left alone, the heterogeneous process permits the development of human

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pp. 34-50; A. Skinner, 'Economics and History - The Scottish Enlightenment', and 'Economics and the Problem of Method', SJPE, XII (1965) pp. 1-22, 267-280; Peter Stein, 'Law and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Thought', in N. T. Phillipson and R. Mitchison (eds.) Scotland in the Age of Improvement (Edinburgh, 1970) pp. 148-165. For a consideration of the emergence of some aspects of historical thought which may have influenced the theoretical philosophy, see Appendix B.

1. John Millar, The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks (hereafter cited Origin) in W. C. Lehmann, John Millar of Glasgow, 1735-1801: His Life and Thought (Cambridge, 1960) p. 218.
2. See below, pp. 93-94, 112-113, 122-125.

nature to occur normally. The force of human inherent capacities leads 'imperfect' or 'incomplete' institutions of one age to gradually change, with time, and through man's gradual achieving of stability, into beneficial systems in another age without any conscious action or thought being involved:

> 'Nations which in later periods of their history, become eminent for (their) wisdom and justice, had, perhaps, in a former age, paroxyms of lawless disorder ... The very policy by which they arrived at their degree of national felicity, was devised as a remedy for outrageous abuse. The establishment of order was dated from the commission of rapes and murders; indignation and private revenge, were the principles on which nations proceded to the expulsion of tyrants, to the emancipation of mankind, and the full explanation of their political rights.' 1

These two interrelating factors of inherent capacity to progress and the heterogeneity of ends together comprise what the theoretical writers saw as 'the natural course of things', and form the basis of an historical philosophy which emphasises the necessity of an economic and political laissez-faire - a philosophy which differs considerably from earlier philosophical emphasis on individuals and on the obvious connection between actions and ends. 'Man', Smith complained, 'is generally considered by statesmen and projectors as the materials of a sort of political mechanics.' These 'projectors', he felt, 'disturb nature in the course of her operations in human affairs'[2] because they had no knowledge of the basic principles which governed man and

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1. Adam Ferguson, An Essay on the History of Civil Society (ed. Duncan Forbes, Edinburgh, 1966, hereafter cited Essay) pp. 242-243.
2. Smith, quoted in Dugald Stewart, Collected Works (ed. Sir William Hamilton, Edinburgh and London, 1854, hereafter cited Works) X, p. 68. See also Ronald Meek, 'Smith, Turgot, and the "Four Stages" theory', Hist. Pol. Econ, 3 (1971) pp. 9-27.

which led to the unaided development of his mind and society. Simple observation of past and present societies, however, indicated that all governmental interference is unnecessary, that 'nature' was in fact simply what man was; and, he decided, 'it requires no more than to let her alone and give her fair play in the pursuit of her ends that she may establish her own designs':

> 'Little else is requisite to carry a state to the highest degree of opulence from the lowest barbarism, but peace, easy taxes, and a tolerable administration of justice; all the rest being brought about by the natural course of things. All governments which thwart this natural course, which force things into another channel, or which endeavour toarrest the progress of society at a particular point are unnatural, and to support themselves are obliged to be oppressive and tyrannical.' 1

It is 'nature', then, the way in which man acts and the manner in which his mind operates that is the material of the theoretical writers, not the study of abstract ideologies or theories of 'what might have been'; and such a philosophy leads the Scottish historians, particularly Smith in Moral Sentiments[2], towards an acceptance of the totality of human life and experience, towards an awareness that each part of the history of man has contributed something towards his development. An understanding of the theoretical beliefs as to the nature of man is therefore of considerable importance; for their ideas as to the operation of the human mind are not only one of the most obvious differences between their historical philosophy and that of earlier schools, but are also fundamental to their major principles of man's capacity to progress, and the heterogeneity of ends.

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1. Smith, in Stewart, Works, X, p. 68.
2. Adam Smith, The Theory of Moral Sentiments (London, 1861, hereafter cited MS).

The theoretical version of the philosophical interpretation of man seeks to clear away the former misconceptions concerning human behaviour, and rather to base all such study on the two inter-connecting principles that are seen as the basis of human life - the capacity to progress and the heterogeneity of ends. Through these factors it hopes to be able to establish that there are no obscurities in our knowledge of man, that we can in fact show 'connexions' and rational sequences in the manner in which man acts, and particularly that all parts of the human experience can be shown to have clear relationships to each other. These relationships reveal that within variations there is a constancy of behaviour, and it is these constant elements in the human mind, as well as the variations which are reflected in them, that the theoretical writers attempt to trace. In man's life, they believe, there are sequences and connections which explain all of his complex behaviour in relatively simple terms.

Smith's philosophy of the human mind - which appears to be the one which underlay the general theoretical approach - reflects his and other theoretical writers' belief that man is not affected by 'philosophical' or rational causes, but is motivated to act through his own interest, and that it is this interest, along with the principle of heterogeneity of ends, which allows him to advance. What he is really showing in Moral Sentiments, therefore, is both the qualities of man and the manner in which they normally develop through time, even though much of his emphasis is on the operations of the mind in the more advanced societies.

In all cases, he sees that it is the natural qualities of man, or the natural relationships produced by his situation, which affect his behaviour; his advances are not based on 'philosophical' factors, but are always based primarily on his desire to advance himself, a desire which is often expressed in most unphilosophical ways. The appearance in society of what are considered philosophical thought and actions, then, must necessarily be heterogenous, produced by the gradual awakening and flowering of the human capacities, which are dependent on improvement in the economic situation. But although certain qualities are dependent upon the emergence of a more secure social system[1], the philosophy of Moral Sentiments reveals the constant and continuing presence of certain factors in the manner in which men act, the manner in which their natural interest is curbed and moderated, and the way in which interest itself leads to a process of constant change. In this way, the aims of theoretical history to remove obscurity, to lessen the importance of the isolated, to show consequences and interconnections between events, to reveal the presence of constant factors, are implemented.

In Smith's thesis, man is motivated neither by reaon[2]

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1. See below, Chapter III. See also Ralph Anspach, 'The Implications of The Theory of Moral Sentiments for Adam Smith's Economic Thought', Hist. Pol. Econ., 4 (1972) pp. 176-206.
2. MS, p. 470.

nor by utility[1]. The forces which move us can never be only those which are produced by time, as these are, for such a causal explanation would fail to account for the earlier stages of human society and our growth and development from these to something more sophisticated, more truly philosophical. Rather, he believes that man is moved by his passions and learns through his senses, and the extent of his response is never some abstract standard but is guided by that which both society in general and various groups within that society deem to be appropriate. This standard itself is always determined by the economic situation of society[2], and is made known through the principle of sympathy.

This principle is one which is basic to man, therefore, and it is distinguished by two features: first, it is eminently social in nature, and, secondly, it communicates all forms of passions: 'Sympathy ... may, without much impropriety, be made use of to denote our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever.'[3] Men have a natural concern

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1. MS, pp. 267-268, and see also pp. 21, 129-130, 263. Certain factors may possess qualities of usefulness to us without our being aware of the manner in which this develops; we may have a sense of system, of the appropriateness of things, which is of no real benefit to us, or at least would not be if man were wholly rational; but such factors, by encouraging the development of economic, through political, change, are in fact very useful to human growth, even if we are unaware of this heterogeneous process.
2. See below, Chapter III.
3. MS, p. 5.

with their fellows because of the social grouping of humankind[1], and desire to gain approval from them of their actions, desire to avoid condemnation, to participate in general social actions:

> 'Nature, when she formed man for society, endowed him with an original desire to please, and an original aversion to offend his brethren. She taught him to feel pleasure in their favourable, and pain in their unfavourable regard. She rendered their approbation most flattering and most agreeable to him for its own sake; and their disapprobation most mortifying and most offensive.' 2

The qualities which we ourselves value, furthermore, are always produced by the system in which they are expressed[3], and thus are dependent on basic material factors, not on some abstract standard. There is, for instance, some limitation as to the actual form of sympathy in primitive society in general, where economic circumstances are characterised by insecurity and men are able to be little more than individuals concerned with the self and with what society deems necessary for upholding its standards[4]. It is only in the civil society that there are two forms of sympathetic process[5], and even here sympathy can sometimes be seen as a matter of duty, of habit, rather than a spontaneous expression of feeling[6]. Nonetheless, the very

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1. MS, pp. 10, 277, 466.
2. Ibid., p. 170.
3. Ibid., p. 296.
4. See Chapter III.
5. MS, p. 26.
6. Millar, An Historical View of the English Government, from the Settlement of the Saxons in Britain, to the Revolution in 1688. To which are subjoined, some Dissertations Connected with the History of the Government, from the Revolution to the Present Time (London, 1818, hereafter cited Hist. View) IV, pp. 246-247.

presence of one form at least in savage society indicates that it is natural to man however much it is dependent on material factors for degree of expression; and, as Smith points out, this principle is seen not only in all ages, but in all types of men - 'the greatest ruffian, the most hardened violater of the laws of society, is not altogether without it'[1] - linking us with each other. We always remain men, capable of feeling, or at the least of trying to blend in with the sentiments of society; and this constancy of response, of our dependence on others, whether we may wish it or not, strengthens the continuity and uniformity of human responses: 'Our continual observations upon the conduct of others insensibly lead us to form to ourselves certain general rules concerning what is fit and proper either to be done or to be avoided.'[2] Sympathy itself, then, is based on a sense of what is appropriate and what deserves merit, and these factors form the moral approbation of all human actions, which is dependent on what any system can afford to make 'moral'.

The social nature of the principle of sympathy is further developed by Smith's concept of the impartial spectator, a concept which also strengthens the idea that sympathy is always what any society can afford, as opposed to being an absolute standard. The principle must always be

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1. MS, p. 3.
2. Ibid., p. 224, and see also p. 476. See also Millar, Hist. View, IV, p. 246: 'Individuals form their notions of propriety according to a general standard, and fashion their morals in conformity to the prevailing taste of the times.'

more regular and stringent than any individual in the society and thus it exists in its proper relationships and the ends which these bring about even if men may be unable to act according to its demands. Thus the bystander or the impartial spectator will often have a response which is not shared by the persons directly involved:

> 'we sometimes feel for another, a passion of which he himself seems to be altogether incapable; because, when we put ourselves in his case, that passion arises in our breast from the imagination, though it does not in his from the reality.' 1

The impartial spectator or bystander or observer who is not involved in any action, who is not personally concerned - and limited by such concern - represents the general level of social awareness, approbation, disapproval and so on. He can never achieve any standard above this norm, and in this sense cannot be considered as an 'ideal', as detached from ordinary standards. To see him in this sense would be to endorse a belief in the possibility of particular 'moral' levels which have no relation to the general social situation, and thereby to ignore Smith's constant emphasis on what is normal or average for any given society or group. The spectator reacts to, sympathises with, all the actions of man which are amenable to the sympathetic process, and stands for the general in any social body. He is always limited by his surroundings, is partial, and is involved in the society itself; he represents and expresses that which 'every human heart is disposed to beat time to, and thereby

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1. MS, p. 7.

applaud', and also identifies with any resentment 'which the breast of every reasonable man is ready to adopt and sympathize with.'[1] Indeed, it is because of his limitations, his lack of extra sensitivity or perception that the spectator often mistakes particular situations or accepts the non-rational basis of social change. This concept, therefore, is an integral part of Smith's emphasis on the extent of the unphilosophical process in human society, of the irrational manner in which the acceptable standard of any group is determined.

We may also see the social nature of the principle of sympathy in Smith's belief that particular passions may have to be moderated or increased for us, for the impartial spectator, to be able to sympathise with them[2]; and thus, the appropriateness of response is determined not by rational thought but by what we have come to find is acceptable. Because of the social rather than the individualistic nature of the capacity of sympathy, we do not enter into all passions equally; and while our sympathy for the social ones is doubled because we identify both with the benefactor and with the recipient, the unsocial passions such as hatred and resentment receive a lower level of response from us - we do not know, and cannot enter into, the precise situation from which they arise.

This splitting, however, is not the result of lack of interest in such situations, but rather of divided loyalties:

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1. MS, p. 97.
2. See MS, p. 31: 'the pitch which the spectator can go along with, must lie, it is evident, in a certain mediocrity'.

we see ourselves in both situations and feel both passions, thus our sympathy is with both the person who feels them, and the person who is the object of them[1]. Yet this is in fact an advantage to society, even though it is hardly intended as such; for if we cannot share the same heightened passion of either party, then both must be lessened to be accepted by us, and sentiments which we consider as 'philosophical' come into being quite unplanned[2]. The principle of sympathy is not a one-way process depending only on the capacity of the spectator to become a part of any situation; and because there cannot always be a precise correspondence of feelings, the person principally concerned is also obliged to participate to an extent beyond the mere expression of his emotional situation[3].

Because of the social nature and heterogeneous effect of this concept of sympathy as it is used to determine the extent of morality or moral sentiments in society, it follows that the idea of'conscience' in Smith's philosophy cannot be something which is external to the norms of society, just as the spectator himself is never the 'ideal'man. While it is apparent that man may have problems in the actual modification of his passions since these must always appear important to him[4], it is also apparent that the need which we have to gain the approval of others will affect the degree

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1. MS, p. 44.
2. Ibid., pp. 33-39. See also Smith, Lectures on Justice, Police, Revenue and Arms (ed. Edwin Cannan, Oxford, 1896, hereafter cited Lectures) p. 232.
3. For the variation in the extent of sympathy, see below, Chapter III.
4. MS, p. 221.

of our response to particular situations. We may find it easy to deceive ourselves, but our observations upon the actions of others and our need to be a part of society, will correct such deception; furthermore, the desire which most of us have to actually be what others think us to be also aids in the development of our conscience, which is clearly very much a social institution[1]. While our actions and appearance may deceive even the spectator, then, we ourselves often correct such a situation:

> 'If the man without should applaud us, either for actions which we have not performed, or for motives which had no influence upon us; the man within can immediately humble that pride and elevation of mind which such groundless acclamations might otherwise occasion, by telling us, that as we know that we do not deserve them, we render ourselves despicable by accepting them.' 2

Conscience, like all of our other moral feelings, is not something which can be dissociated from the norm, but is very much dependent upon society. However much the idea of 'the man within' suggests innate concepts of morality which have little relationship to variations in economic stability, the fact that some members of society do not possess such checks in full, and that these limitations vary according to the standards of society, tends to limit such a theory. The 'general rules of morality':

> 'are ultimately founded upon experience of what, in particular instances, our moral faculties,

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1. MS, pp. 161,164, 176-177, 184,192-194. Some groups in the civil society do not feel obliged to conform to ordinary morality but their moral sentiments are also social, and indeed, often useful: see below, pp. 61-65.
2. MS, p. 186.

> our natural sense of merit and propriety, approve or disapprove of. We do not originally approve or condemn particular actions, because, upon examination, they appear to be agreeableor inconsistent with a certain general rule. The general rule, on the contrary, is formed by finding from experience that all actions of a certain kind, or circumstanced in a certain manner, are approved or disapproved of.' 1

The second major characteristic of the sympathetic process is that it covers all the passions, expresses all sorts of feelings, and because of this it is seen to be of considerable importance in the theoretical interpretation in that it can be used as a consistent factor in the explaining of the entire range of human response to situations. It always remains the means, whether in the earliest or the most sophisticated society, whereby the social experience and level of sentiment is made known to men. To it, benevolence and interest, or the concern for others and that for the self, are equal, in that it communicates both and reflects any changes in social attitudes towards both.

In Smith's opinion, the extent of benevolence is limited in any form of society, nor is it something which is absolutely vital either to man or to the welfare of any system. These are always dependent primarily on economic factors. Nonetheless, it is seen by him to be a highly desirable element, particularly in that man's capacity to feel for others tends to make society more tolerable and more peaceful, and permits the development of the more gentle qualities of human nature[2]. This is not to say

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1. MS, pp. 224-225.
2. Ibid., p. 330.

that benevolence is limited to later forms of society, however; even though Smith was aware of the limitations imposed on men in the early stages of society[1], he believed that benevolence, which is produced by habitual close contact[2], was produced in all forms of society. The social passions, of love, generosity, charity, kindness and so on[3], are not produced by rational reflection but are spontaneous productions of social situations, and depend for their emergence on our belief that our feelings are directed towards those who are worthy of them. Benevolence leads us to act spontaneously to produce a particular closeness of relationship that is conducive to happiness and stability:

> 'All the members of human society stand in need of each other's assistance, and are likewise exposed to mutual injuries. Where the necessary assistance is reciprocally afforded from love, from gratitude, from friendship and esteem, the society flourishes and is happy. All the different members of it are bound together by the agreeable bands of love and affection, and are, as it were, drawn to one common centre of mutual good offices.' 4

It is true, nonetheless, that the nature and extent of benevolence varies from one form of society to another, and that not only is it limited in societies where men have little real contact with each other[5], but that, being the result of close contact between men, its expression will necessarily vary with the variations in the components of society. Hence the term benevolence is used to describe the relationships of members of families, those which we have between ourselves

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1. See below, pp.82-86.
2. MS, p. 321.
3. Ibid., pp. 52 passim.
4. Ibid., p. 124.
5. See below, pp. 86-88.

and the persons with whom we work, and those, for instance, which are the basis of certain types of society - the kinship system of Scotland, a natural expression of pastoral societies, which Smith sees remains of in his own time[1], was also a form of benevolence. Furthermore, the nature and extent of benevolence will also change in relation to changes within society. In the civil society, for instance, that closeness which we have come to think of as a natural part of family life, may be affected by the forms of education which separate children and parents and which thus destroy the close contact that leads to this 'benevolence'[2], and the gradual sophistication and greater extent of 'justice'[3] may make kinship benevolence superfluous[4]. Such changes are entirely normal and reflect the stadial and evolutionary nature of this particular passion or sentiment.

As well as emphasising that this quality varies according to the economic basis of society, Smith is also concerned to point out both its unphilosophical or irrational elements, and the heterogeneous or unintended effects which it produces. It is true, he feels, that the social passions are those which easily gain approval from the spectator[5], and true also that beneficience is most appropriately a response made to similar feelings which have been directed towards ourselves[6]. Even if we do not receive the appro-

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1. MS, pp. 326-327.
2. MS, pp. 325-327. However, see Chapter IV below, where there is a consideration of Smith's feelings about the interference with the proper operations of the moral sentiments.
3. See pp. 70-76 below, and also Chapter IV.
4. MS, p. 331.
5. Ibid., pp. 52 passim.
6. Ibid., p. 331.

priate response to our own feelings, the sympathetic process guarantees that this response is nonetheless felt in general, and 'no benevolent man ever lost altogether the fruits of his benevolence.'[1] He also feels, however, that we often have an excess of benevolence towards some persons - those whose wealth and status we respect - and a corresponding decrease in the appropriate sentiments towards those whom we see as inferior to us and to whom we should act kindly and with charity[2]. Given the particular character of human nature, however, such 'discrepancies' are entirely natural and indeed, quite without our intending them to do so, tend to establish a social structure which is conducive to stability[3].

Furthermore, the feelings of benevolence which we have towards our own country which lead us to support its aims above those of any other state, are often excessive; certainly they lead us to hold somewhat unphilosophical sentiments concerning the advance of other nations[4]. At the same time, however, that he points out how much envy over the material prosperity of other states is both beneath our dignity and shows that we do not see how much it is basically beneficial to ourselves, Smith also indicates that such sentiments are natural and to some degree, even useful:

> 'That wisdom which contrived the system of human affections, as well as that of every other part of nature, seems to have judged that the interest

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1. MS, p. 331.
2. Ibid.
3. See below, pp. 60-66.
4. MS, p. 336.

> of the great society of mankind would be best promoted by directing the principle attention of each individual to that particular portion of it which was most within the sphere both of his abilities and of his understanding.' 1

In this statement he re-iterates what is a common theme in all of MS, not only the somewhat automatic, unthinking operations of man and the effectiveness of these because of the interconnection of all parts of nature, but also that those factors which are called by him 'virtues' cover a much wider range of actions than the more traditional concept of 'virtue' ever did. While benevolence itself, therefore, in its expression through the social passions, is clearly identifiable with older forms of 'virtue', some of the ways in which Smith sees it applied especially in modern civilised society are more unusual. He indicated in some detail how much different societies possessed different forms of benevolence and these differences, he believed, were due primarily to the needs produced by each economic form[1]. When such forms changed gradually, so also did the particular expressions of benevolence. At the same time, however, benevolence is also continued in the more advanced systems, here expressing itself through the factors which have replaced, for instance, the old kinship systems. Hence, while law itself makes men equal, the various ranks and classes within society nonetheless seek to preserve their own position, through their feelings of benevolence or relationship with their own class interests, and the constitution of the society necessarily changes in proportion as they increase or lose their

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1. MS, p. 337.

power. In all of society, then, we may see that benevolence, like all other passions, is related to all aspects of social life, and that it is particularly strong in such matters where feelings - either for the country at large by the statesman, or by members of any given class - are generally beneficial: we seek to advance our own causes, or those of our country, limited ends, if entirely acceptable ones, and when this ambition is confined within reasonable limits it produces greater ends, the general stability and security of the system[1]. Benevolence, therefore, is not necessarily only an abstract form of friendship or respect, but is also related to our desires for position and status, to our individual and class concerns: in other words, it can also include interest, hence it is not entirely other-related. In such a process, good can come from lack of the 'philosophical' and through the normal expression of man's nature.

Even without the particular nature of beneficient feelings being extended to matters of interest, it is obvious that Smith's theories consider in great detail the means by which man advances through his own interest. This vital element, which produces greater benefits than men intend, is an integral part of Smith's emphasis on virtues other than the traditional. Yet, this is not to say that interest is unsocial or clearly separated from the contact with men that characterises beneficence. Interest is in fact clearly a social passion in that it is fundamental to the development of society, because it is the most obvious expression

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1. MS, pp. 337-344.

of man's desire to advance himself. In Smith's philosophy, it is apparent, man always gains what he has through action - the most characteristic feature of the human being[1] - and much of this action is automatically and naturally directed towards the benefit of the self:

> 'Every man is, no doubt, by nature, first and principally recommended to his own care; and as he is fitter to take care of himself, than of any other person, it is fit and right that it should be so. Every man, therefore, is much more deeply interested in whatever immediately concerns himself, than in what concerns any other man.' 2

So long as he observes certain rules which assure that self-interest may also be expressed by his fellows, 'in the race for wealth and honours, and preferments, he may run as hard as he can'[3]. This particular passion, it must be stressed, has no connotation of selfishness because it is entirely natural that man ascertain his own needs and wants, and attempt to fulfil these to the greatest extent possible. Indeed, if he lacks this quality he is hardly fit for society, because it is individual actions which make the whole society advance, and because it is through himself that man becomes aware of his fellow men. If his original capacity for serving himself is lacking it is hardly likely that he will be able to play any part, however much it may be the bare mini-

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1. MS, p. 154: 'That he may call forth the whole vigour of his soul, and strain every nerve, in order to produce those ends which it is the purpose of his being to advance, Nature has taught him, that neither himself nor mankind can be fully satisfied with his conduct, nor bestow upon it the full measure of applause, unless he has actually produced them.'
2. Ibid., p. 119; see also An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations (ed. Edwin Cannan, London, 1950, hereafter cited WN) I, p. 475.
3. MS, p. 120.

mum, within society proper:

> 'The man who feels little for his own misfortunes must always feel less for those of other people, and to be less disposed to relieve them. The man who has little resentment for the injuries which are done to himself, must always have less for those which are done to other people, and be less disposed either to protect or to avenge them. A stupid insensibility to the events of human life necessarily extinguishes all that keen and earnest attention to the propriety of our own conduct, which constitutes the real essence of virtue.' 1

For man to exist as a person, as an individual, therefore, he must first be conscious of himself, and self-interest is the means through which this consciousness is developed. Once society is established on certain principles, and even in its most rudimentary stages, the most essential contact between men is not through any highly developed sense of 'virtue' or the love of others, but rather through love of self. Men, all acting on this principle, will at least gain not only the minimum for themselves, but also aid the process through which society develops; and thus self-love is the means by which any group of individuals operates, not so much as a collection of separate persons, but rather as a community:

> 'Man has almost constant occasion for the help of his brethren, and it is in vain for him to expect it from their benevolence only. He will be more likely to prevail if he can interest their self-love in his favour, and show them that it is for their own advantage to do for him what he requires of them. Whoever offers to another a bargain of any kind, proposes to do this. Give me that which I want, and you shall have this which you want, is the meaning of every such offer; and it is in this manner that we obtain from one another the far greater part of those good offices which we stand in need of.' 2

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1. MS, p. 359.
2. WN, I, p. 18.

The power of self interest comes from the close correlation between the observance of ordinary rules of behaviour and the laws of economic advantage, which means that virtue brings reward in proportion. This relationship, indeed, is not based on anything more than fulfillment of the duties demanded of man by the polished society; for the laws of nature which ascertain that economic activity, properly carried out, is recompensed by achievement of end, is unaffected by what men may feel, or the spirit which actually drives them: 'By pursuing his interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it.'[1] The knave who cultivates the soil will prosper, the good man who is indolent will not; nature has no regard to men, but merely to that which men do[2]. Action rather than ideas will always be of more importance, at least as far as the 'natural course of things' is concerned:

> 'If we consider the general rules by which external prosperity and adversity are commonly distributed in this life, we shall find, that notwithstanding the disorder in which all things appear to be in this world, yet even here every virtue naturally meets with its proper reward, with the recompence which is most fit to encourage and promote it ... What is the reward most proper for encouraging industry, prudence, and circumspection? - Success in every sort of business. And is it possible that in the whole of life these virtues should fail of attaining it? - Wealth and external honours are their proper recompence, and the recompence which they can seldom fail of acquiring.' [3]

The most essential factor in any society which lays a

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1. WN, I, pp. 477-478.
2. Ibid., pp. 370-371.
3. MS, p. 236.

claim to having established the true laws of morality, of simple justice or that limitation of self which permits a proper relationship between interest and prosperity, is that it permits the free and uninterrupted continuation of the natural propensity to barter and to trade, which is the basic support of self-interest and of social advance. From this comes the division of labour, by which commercial society is able, theoretically, to extend the benefits of its experience and knowledge to all members of the society, and thereby create that true equality which makes for a natural justice. As self-interest is spontaneous, so are the advantages which result from its free exercise:

> 'This division of labour, from which so many advantages are derived, is not originally the effect of any human wisdom, which foresees and intends that general opulence to which it gives occasion. It is the necessary, though very slow and gradual, consequence of a certain propensity in human nature which has in view no such extensive utility.' 1

Yet, however much any society might have reached this particular stage, and however much its geographic and climatic situation may provide the fundamental means by which it will prosper[2], the extent of such prosperity cannot be determined by such factors. This must always rather be indicated by any restrictive laws. It is admitted that the strength of the virtue of self-interest will nearly always succeed against either political philosophies or economic theories which are essentially detrimental to it through restricting the natural liberty of man; but the particular

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1. WN, I, p. 17.
2. Ibid., p. 24.

rate of development can indeed be affected, which leads Smith to distinguish somewhat between what is natural and what is normal[1].

It is in the nature of man, for instance, that his own passions, his growing awareness of interest, will occasionally lead him into deviations from the natural relationship between liberty and economic return, and such deviations are seen as normal. The acceptance of the complexity of man, and of the ways in which he achieves a form of justice that we ourselves sympathise with is an integral part of the philosophical basis of theoretical history; just as much as interest itself and the effects which it has explains the variations in human behaviour at the same time as it provides a thread of consistency throughout the theoretical interpretation. The particular effects of the dominance of the normal is traced in some detail by Smith and Millar, and what they see led to the general conclusion that Smith had already arrived at in 1755, that

> 'All systems either of preference or of restraint, therefore, being thus completely taken away, the obvious and simple system of natural liberty establishes itself of its own accord. Every man, as long as he does not violate the laws of justice, is left perfectly free to pursue his own interest his own way, and to bring both his industry and capital into competition with those of any other man, or order of men.' 2

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1. See Henry J. Bitterman, 'Adam Smith's Empiricism and the Law of Nature', Journal of Political Economy, XLVIII (1940) pp. 487-520, 703-734; see also Chapter III.
2. WN, II, p. 208; see also ibid., pp. 3-209 for a consideration of the interference in the natural course of things by ideology, and of the necessity of 'justice', including limitations on such ideology.

Interest is a continuous expression in man's life, and while it is an entirely natural passion, it is always related to the laws of sympathy, both as to its expression and also as to its limitations: because of this, the forms which it may take, in accordance with the changing of society, are always expressed through sympathy, and this process reflects many of the means by which we advance ourselves and society along with us. One of the more interesting of Smith's arguments in this matter is the study which he makes of the personal actions of men resulting from the natural desire which we possess to gain the respect of our fellows, and also to be worthy of this respect, to actually possess the qualities which we appear to have:

> 'Though it is in order to supply the necessities and conveniences of the body that the advantages of external fortune are originally recommended to us, yet we cannot live long in the world without perceiving that the respect of our equals, our credit and rank in the society we live in, depend very much upon the degree in which we possess, or are supposed to possess, those advantages. The desire of becoming the proper objects of this respect, of deserving and obtaining this credit and rank among our equals, is perhaps the strongest of all our desires; and our anxiety to obtain the advantages of fortune is, accordingly, much more excited and irritated by this desire than by that of supplying all the necessities and conveniences of the body, which are always very easily supplied.' 1

This is a process which may differ in content according to time or social grouping, but which is always constant in its basic premise. Such a desire is an integral part of the sympathetic process, for, even if sympathy is used more often to transmit suffering rather than joy, it is easier

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1. MS, pp. 310-311; see also Millar, Hist. View, IV, p. 274.

for men to sympathise more with fortune, to enter more fully into the sentiments which joy or happiness bring; and it is for this reason that we respect the status, the wealth, and the possessions of others: 'It is because mankind are disposed to sympathize more entirely with our joy than with our sorrow, that we make parade of our riches, and conceal our poverty.'[1] Such need to gain respect or feeling from others is the cause of our desire to advance, to improve our material position, even though such improvement may bring few apparent or even real benefits. While economic factors are always the most profound basis of the state, therefore, and the means by which man's passions are expressed, it is apparent that we must always be aware also of the nature of man which leads us to express our feelings in an economic fashion:

> 'Nothing is so mortifying as to be obliged to expose our distress to the view of the public, and to feel, that though our situation is open to the eyes of all mankind, no mortal conceives for us the half of what we suffer. Nay, it is chiefly from this regard to the sentiments of mankind, that we pursue riches and avoid poverty.' [2]

In this particular expression of interest, the pursuit of such respect and status has several effects, all

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1. MS, p. 70. In this quote, the key word is 'entirely'; man's preference for the feelings produced by security and status is greater than those produced by suffering because of the very fact that through sympathy he feels at least part of what his fellows are experiencing. If there is diversity of sentiment, then the person principally concerned must lessen his response in order for us to enter into it: thus what we sympathise with, in such instances, is less than the actor himself is feeling: see above, p.46 and also MS, p. 22.
2. Ibid., p. 70.

of which lead to the heterogeneous progression of society, assuming the absence of thoroughly inhibiting laws. It is apparent that our very respect for particular customs or ranks leads us to maintain particular divisions which already exist in the society and which have come about through the inequalities of property, the superiority of age or of physical capacity. These divisions are entirely natural to men, the theoretical writers believed, firstly, and most importantly, because they are a response to situation; and secondly, because the theoretical philosophy emphasised that the idea of the natural and continuing equality of men was merely an abstract concept, which bore little relation to observed fact. It failed to take into account man's irrational and non-philosophical nature which accepted and approved of rank and status and discrepancies of wealth. This emphasis on the naturalness of such divisions in life and of man's acceptance of them does not necessarily distinguish the theoretical from general philosophical writers; but it is noticeable that the theoretical capacity to use position and possession as a distinguishing factor of man, as opposed to attempting to suggest that the wisdom and age characteristic of earlier ages was continued in more sophisticated forms of society, is a distinct separation from those political theories which are essentially primitivistic in their desire to retain the concept of superiority of moral faculties as being the basis of political power:

> 'Nature has wisely judged that the distinction of ranks, the peace and order of society, would rest more securely upon the plain and palpable difference of birth and fortune, than upon the invisible

> and often uncertain difference of wisdom and virtue. The undistinguishing eyes of the great mob of mankind can well enough perceive the former: it is with difficulty that the nice discernment of the wise and the virtuous can sometimes distinguish the latter. In the order of all these recommendations, the benevolent wisdom of nature is equally evident.' 1

By this means, it is apparent, we increase the likelihood of the stability of the society which is certainly a prime consideration for Smith as a man of moderation who is sceptical of the claims of politicians and tolerant of a wide variety of non-'virtuous' behaviour, provided that it does not invade the rights of men[2]. To some degree, Smith indicates that the respect which we show for those in a class above us - our beneficence - encourages certain qualities in this group such as flippancy and ostentation, that it is destructive of one sort of morality which depends on thrift, temperance and hard work. The process of sympathy leads us to tolerate the factors in the behaviour of the rich which, to the philosophical or moral eye, are productive of great inequities: 'Upon this disposition of mankind, to go along with all the passions of the rich and the powerful, is founded the distinction of ranks, and the order of society.'[3] Yet it is also his contention, that not only do we not regard matters from this philosophical viewpoint, being able to tolerate a wide range of behaviour without thereby disturbing the state, but also that there is more than one form of morality in the civil society, and the behaviour of the ordinary man is not in fact affected by his feelings

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1. MS, p. 332; see also ibid., p. 125.
2. See below, pp. 69-73.
3. MS, I, p. 73.

concerning those above him. In this distinction, he dismisses once more the traditional attitude towards human behaviour and reveals the variations which the nature of man can successfully accept:

> 'Two different roads are presented to us, equally leading to the attainment of this so much desired object; the one, by the study of wisdom and the practice of virtue; the other, by the acquisition of wealth and greatness. Two different characters are presented to our emulation; the one of proud ambition and ostentatious avidity; the other, of humble modesty and equitable justice. Two different models, two different pictures are held out to us, according to which we may fashion our own character and behaviour.' 1

The existence of these two forms of morality is a natural product of the varying situation of different groups within a social system; and while it is obvious that the particular tendencies of the upper class towards vanity and status leads the members of this to act in such a manner as will gain admiration[2] it is also obvious that those of the other classes would come to ruin if they themselves attempted to gain the respect of their fellows in a similar fashion[3]. To some extent, it may appear that Smith here extols more the traditional virtues, of hard work and thrift, _per se_, and does not explicitly relate these to the economic and social pressures which produced them. Yet, it is also apparent that his respect for such qualities and for the benefits which they do bring, is produced by his awareness

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1. _MS_, pp. 84-85.
2. _MS_, p. 78; this process is particularly clearly illustrated in the decay of the aristocracy at the time when material goods became much more readily available: see pp. 101-108 below.
3. See _MS_, p. 86.

that they are natural to a particular group of men at least and, furthermore, that they are natural in the sense that they are spontaneously produced. He is not here saying, therefore, that we must divorce interest from the actual expression of such traditional qualities; for it is obvious that, in the theoretical philosophy, these qualities are in fact produced by interest itself. Our desire for respect, and also our wish to be in fact truly 'virtuous', that is, possessing the Smithian virtues, leads us to serve our own interest.

Here also we see the importance of another virtue particularly, that of prudence which, like interest, is fundamentally concerned with the self; and it can only be the 'most frivolous and superficial of mankind'[1] who are glad to receive reward where none is due. To really gain the full benefits of the process of sympathy,therefore, we wish to possess the qualities which lead others to sympathise with us[2]: 'Praise and blame express what actually are; praiseworthiness and blameworthiness what naturally ought to be the sentiments of other people with regard to our character and conduct'[3]. Thus, Nature has 'endowed' man:

> 'not only with a desire of being approved of, but a desire of being what ought to be approved of; or of being what he himself approves of in other men. The first desire could only have made him wish to appear to be fit for society. The second was necessary in order to render him anxious to be really fit. The first could only have prompted him to the affectation of virtue, and to the concealment of vice. The second was necessary in order to inspire him with the real love of virtue, and with the real abhorrence of vice.' 4

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1. MS, p. 174.
2. Though prudence only gains a cool respect, because it pertains to the self; see MS, p. 87.
3. Ibid., p. 183.
4. Ibid., p. 170.

The virtue of prudence, therefore, added to that of natural interest, and motivated by the natural desire of man to be in the good opinion of his fellows, leads him to work to gain this respect, a labour which unintentionally, and through the process of heterogeneity, clearly benefits the community:

> 'In the middling and inferior stations of life, the road to virtue and that to fortune, to such fortune, at least, as men in such stations can reasonably expect to acquire, are, happily, in most cases very nearly the same ... real and solid professional abilities, joined to prudent, just, fir, and temperate conduct, can very seldom fail of success ... Men in the inferior and middling stations of life, besides, can never be great enough to be above the law, which must generally overawe them into some sort of respect for, at least, the more important rules of justice. The success of such people, too, almost always depends upon the favour and good opinion of their neighbours and equals ... In such situations, therefore, we may generally expect a considerable degree of virtue; and, fortunately for the good morals of society, these are the situations of by far the greater part of mankind.' 1

Again, Smith reveals that sympathy tolerates interest as well as actions concerning others; and the operation of interest and the ends which are produced through this reinforce also the constant thesis of the theoretical writers that men do not achieve the philosophical through conscious or planned action or thought. However irrational men's fancies may be, it is equally unreasonable to expect them to base their actions always on philosophical thought, since this will generally involve a conscious reasoning process as opposed to the more automatic quality of self-interest. It is absurd to hope to change the manner in which men think, completely and thoroughly, especially

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1. MS, pp. 86-87.

since much of the irrational is the means by which man progresses; man is motivated by many factors, and while self-interest may nearly always be genuine interest, it is quite possible that none of the factors which happen to be the immediate cause of this may appear at all rational. Here, therefore, we must always distinguish between that which appears chimerical, and that which may have some good resulting from it and which may therefore be conducive to man's progress. There is a particular end, after all, in the love which man has for position and respect and if there is no truth in the belief that a man of superior class has greater security than a poor one, assuming the latter has certain fundamental needs, we are still impelled to act as though this were not so:

> 'Of such mighty importance does it appear to be, in the imaginations of men, to stand in that situation which sets them most in the view of general sympathy and attention. And thus, place ... is the end of half the labours of human life; and is the cause of all the tumult and bustle, all the rapine and injustice, which avarice and ambition have introduced into this world.' 1

Nonetheless, although certain aspects of such processes may be detrimental, this is mainly so only because they are unchecked; however lacking in rationality, the behaviour of men in this manner is perfectly sound in economic principles. The constant demand for goods and place encourage men to be virtuous while at the same time it makes possible those commodities which establish power among the largest possible number. The principle itself then, can hardly be seen as wrong.

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1. MS, p. 80.

It is important to remember, Smith indicates, that however much things may appear wrong to us, it is perhaps a greater wrong to seek a balance for society along planned principles which do not take into account both the inexplicable nature of some actions, and the gradual and slow change which is necessary for that prized stability. The actions of those who had considerable power but paid little attention to the natural rhythms of the system in which they lived he considered as irresponsible, because disruptive of that which represented the real gains of men. Furthermore, they were, in the long run, unnecessary; the natural capacity of man to adapt and to better himself is often sufficient to overcome the inequities and injustices of life, and does so in a natural manner. The power of self-interest is so strong that in many cases it will overcome the immediate disadvantages of particular faults - as it must have done for us to have a present at all - and will generally be able to carry man on through his most difficult times:

> 'The uniform, constant, and uninterrupted effort of every man to better his condition, the principles from which public and national, as well as private opulence is originally derived, is frequently powerful enough to maintain the natural progress of things towards improvement, in spite both of the extravagance of government, and of the greatest errors of administration.' 1

Again, this reveals the importance to Smith's theory of the capacity of the natural process to tolerate many factors which did not normally come under the older ideas of virtue, but which did possess the essential meaning of the

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1. WN, I, p. 364; see also I, p. 367.

virtu of the Machiavellian/Harringtonian tradition, that of public benefit through a wide variety of means, and, as far as the commonwealth writers were concerned, without either conscious or self-denying action[1].

In his study of the sympathetic process in man, Smith indicated that it was sympathy also which suggested the extent of the actual limitations on man's actions, just as it had determined the means by which we continue the divisions in society and the economic advance. If we are permitted by interest to act for ourselves, we are also necessarily limited in this process by an awareness of the social prohibitions on carrying this to excess, a series of inhibitions which have come about through gradual social development and which have the effect of ascertaining particular economic benefits. Our desire of being accepted by our fellows leads us to limit the excesses of our own interests, so that our need for interaction with others, produced by sympathy itself, helps to produce justice:

> 'Though it may be true, therefore, that every individual, in his own breast, naturally prefers himself to all mankind, yet he dares not look mankind in the face, and avow that he acts according to this principle ... When he views himself in the light in which he is conscious that others will view him, he sees that to them he is but one of the multitude, in no respect better than any other in it. If he would act so as that the impartial spectator may enter into the principles of his conduct, which is what of all things he has the greatest desire to do, he must upon this, as upon all other occasions, humble the arrogance of his self-love, and bring it down to something which other men can go along with.' 2

While these limitations might appear to be interest, therefore, they are specifically related to our relationship

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1. See Appendix B.
2. MS, p. 120

with others in society and are not, like interest and prudence, directly concerned with the self. They arise not so much from conscious utilitarian thought but from the need to protect the various rights which man possesses, in his life, in his property and in his social contracts:

> 'The most sacred laws of justice, therefore, those whose violation seems to call loudest for vengeance and punishment, are the laws which guard the life and person of our neighbour; the next are those which guard his property and possessions; and last of all come those which guard what are called his personal rights, or what is due to him from the promises of others.' 1

Justice, it is to be noted, does not refer to our actual feelings for others, but our actions towards them[2], even though the principle upon which justice operates, in part at least, is the feeling of resentment. It is through this feeling that we are motivated to gain revenge on those who have wronged us and it is apparent in Smith's theory that this principle is a natural and certainly a very useful one. While the unsocial passions in particular therefore, have of necessity to be moderated in order to gain sympathy, and this in itself is a beneficial lessening of passions, it is also apparent that we must in fact experience such feelings. Resentment, like interest, is a necessary part of man, and is an entirely valid response[3], and it is always an integral part of the proposition of the dominance of interest - that a man may run as hard as he please - that 'if he should justle or throw down any of

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1. MS, p. 121.
2. Ibid., p. 114: 'The violation of justice is injury: it does real and positive hurt to some particular persons, from motives which are naturally disapproved of'.
3. See MS, pp. 44-45, 50-51.

them, the indulgence of the spectators is entirely at an end.'[1] The injured party feels resentment, and society will support him in this feeling: if we are to regain our fellow-feeling with men, then, we must always limit our interest to that which is provided by the law.

As in all other expressions of human response, therefore, we are guided not by the philosophical awareness of end, but of the response which society itself demands. Furthermore, it is true to say that this response is in fact demanded and that, heterogeneously, man creates justice which is of considerable benefit to the stability of the society and hence to the individual himself:

> 'The moment that injury begins, the moment that mutual resentment and animosity take place, all the bands ... are broken assunder, and the different members of which society consisted, are, as it were, dissipated and scattered abroad by the violence and opposition of their discordant affections ...
>
> Justice is the main pillar that upholds the whole edifice. If it is removed, the great, the immense fabric of human society, that fabric which, to raise and support, seems, in this world, if I may say so, to have been the particular and darling care of nature, must in a moment crumble into atoms.' 2

Justice, therefore, is a precise science, and one which we can enforce because of its precision, as we must enforce because of its importance to man. Here, again, Smith, and other theoretical writers, stress that while benevolence is useful, its absence can be tolerated, while the absence of justice will mean the destruction of the society itself. They also indicate in their study of justice that while it is vital it can never be seen to repre-

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1. MS, p. 120.
2. MS, p. 249. Millar, Hist. View, IV, pp. 245-246, 255-256, 274.

sent 'equity', or any law which is not appropriate to, or the result of, the existing social circumstances. It is always the laws of man, and never the laws of nature or of what might be the best and most perfect response to individual situation. This particular assessment further reinforces the basic theoretical position, that it is not the individual expression which concerns us, but the general one, that which is necessarily produced by the whole society.

While it is true, then, that the society itself and its situation produces the variations in benevolence in a general sense, it is to the more fundamental manifestations of the social feeling that we must turn if we are to find that which is steady and productive of a modicum of security. It must necessarily embody not the isolated and the conscious denial of self which benevolence itself in extreme instances may do, but the ordinary and usual expression of limitation of interest, and desire for sympathetic interchange. It is only through the inculcation of justice, therefore, that we can establish a particular standard on which we can depend, and it is this which provides for that stability which is of such benefit to society. Duty, the expression of response which we may not actually feel, and justice, are the very mainstay of the civil system:

> 'It may perhaps be affirmed with reason, that, from prudent and well-directed interpositions of that nature, more diffusive benefit is likely to arise, both to the public and to individuals, than from the warmest occasional ebullitions of tender-hearted and thoughtless generosity. This, at least, is indisputable, that mere generosity without the punctual observance of the rules of justice, is of less consequence to the prosperity

> and good order of society, than the latter, though without any considerable share of the former.' 1

Thus, the ordinary actions of man are not thereby defined as 'virtuous' because 'virtue is excellence, something uncommonly great and beautiful, which rises far above what is vulgar and ordinary'[2]. But at the same time, there is a distinction made between being virtuous in this sense, and practising the various virtues such as those of prudence and justice. Here Smith is distinguishing between the usual and the greater amount of response or appropriate action to situations, and not stating that the virtues of human society are in effect those of traditional concepts of morality. His praise for the most virtuous man:

> 'who joins, to the most perfect command of his own original and selfish feelings, the most exquisite sensibility both to the original and sympathetic feelings of others. The man who, to all the soft, the amiable, and the gentle virtues, joins all the great, the awful, and the respectable.'[3]

is certainly sincere, and yet at the same time he is aware that this level of behaviour, of sympathetic interchange, is not the norm. It is vastly to the benefit of society if all men acted as the most virtuous did, although if this were the case, we should perhaps be obliged to find a new definition of virtuousness. And we may see at the same time, that prudence, or the most appropriate response that the normal man can give, is also of benefit to soc-

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1. Miller, Hist. View, IV, pp. 255-256; see also MS, pp. 229, 230-231.
2. Ibid., p. 28.
3. Ibid., p. 214.

iety; so that while the prudent man may not gain approbation or admiration because of the ordinariness of his actions, it is noticeable that these are nonetheless of considerable public benefit, and support the theoretical belief in the value of the ordinary and steady. Self-command especially, the moderation of feelings, the steady 'sacrificing the ease and enjoyment of the moment for the probable expectation of the still greater ease and enjoyment of a more distant but more lasting period of time'[1], are the qualities of the prudent man, and those which, in the advanced society at least, always gain the full approval both of the spectator and the conscience. These achieve particular benefit perhaps because they are constant and steady, and therefore contribute more to society than the isolated actions of the great individuals:

> 'he sets a much better example than has frequently been done by men of much more splendid talents and virtues - who in all ages, from that of Socrates and Aristippus down to that of Dr. Swift and Voltaire, and from that of Philip and Alexander the Great down to that of the great Czar Peter of Muscovy, have too often distinguished themselves by the most improper and even insolent contempt of all the ordinary decorums of life and conversation, and who have thereby set the most pernicious example to those who wish to resemble them, and who too often content whemselves with imitating their follies without even attempting to attain their perfections.' 2

Again, Smith reinforces the theoretical belief in the emphasis of the whole, and the regular, not the sporadic on which we can base little; the achievements of society are to be measured through the norm, and not through those expressions

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1. MS, p. 314.
2. Ibid., pp. 313-314.

of interest which may achieve little that is concrete. Individual concerns may be the mark of the early stages of society, but these ought to be something which in the later stages have little long-term effect.

It is noticeable also that justice must necessarily vary with the changing circumstances of man as it always expresses the level of any individual society. Thus, to some degree, that which is seen as 'equity' in one age may eventually become an integral part of social opinion and, later, of the laws of justice itself. Yet, as indicated above, this introduction of new ideas must have necessarily been absorbed gradually, and these must express the feelings of the society itself, and not that of a small group of men. Therefore they no longer possess the characteristic of equity which is something above the norm. Unless justice has these qualities, also, it cannot be related in any sense to the sympathetic process, which demands a response from others, a general level represented by the spectator, and which secures 'justice' particularly because of our desire to gain the respect of our fellow men. We must always guard against those 'writers of jurisprudence'[1], therefore, whose concern with the older sense of 'morality' as something above man which he must attain by extraordinary effort, blinds them to the fact that not only is 'justice' itself distinct from benevolence, but also that it is never gained by any considerable process of conscious or self-denying action. It may involve some limitation of self and some con-

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1. Millar, Hist. View, IV, p. 283.

sideration of others, yet this is in a sense spontaneous and related to the forces of natural reactions of men. At the same time, it does not mean that men go outside of themselves or of what they can afford, because justice is never 'what a good man, from the utmost propriety of feelings and scruples of conscience would be disposed to do', but what 'an upright judge would compel him to perform'[1]. We become aware of what justice comprises through our social processes, through our conscience, through the spectator, through sympathy, and our desire to gain the approval of others; and in no instance do any of these demand more than that which is developed by the social system in which we live.

The concept of human nature which Smith in particular developed stresses especially that man is a social being and thus his standards develop both within a social framework and without his being aware of the process by which his actions achieve greater ends than those he himself intended. The heterogeneous process is spontaneous and is such that it utilises all the variety of human feelings and passions in order to lead men towards a stable and more 'philosophical' society; and the theoretical writers accept a far wider range of causal factors as the basis of the evolution of society than do the general philosophical authors, at the same time as they accept that such factors are rarely rational or consciously 'benevolent' or utilitarian. Their thesis maintains that great changes occur not only unintended, but as a result of human interest, that the means by which society

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1. Millar, Hist. View, IV, p. 283.

expresses its sentiments remain uniform throughout time, that change in sentiments is not individualistic and hence is not dependent upon the emergence of the great man or the occurrence of the accidental event.

Such a theory, it is apparent, differs noticeably from that of writers such as Voltaire, who did not undertake to study human nature in such detail or to base its operation on such basic principles as the capacity to progress and the heterogeneity of ends; and it enables the theoretical writers to account for both past and present societies through general laws at the same time as it permits them to account for variations in the expression of passions and moral sentiments. Allied with the theory of the economic basis of social change, which is discussed in the following chapter, this concept of human nature goes far towards fulfilling the aim of the theoretical history to show the sequences and connections by which the experiences of man throughout time are linked together to form a whole.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL HISTORY II - THE INTERACTION OF PROPERTY AND HUMAN NATURE

The second basic thesis of the theoretical philosophy was that man was endowed with certain propensities which needed only the right conditions in order to flourish and develop. This characteristic of the inherent capacity to progress, however, cannot be seen as an indication that the theoretical writers believed in innate qualities, for this is a concept which is contrary to their idea of the gradual development of man. While men are endowed with this capacity, and endowed also with the capacity to make social responses, these do not come into their true or full nature as far as the theoretical philosophy is concerned until man acts within his social setting and throughout historical time. As Smith points out, for example, such passions and principles as conscience, interest, and sympathy all depend on men interacting and responding to particular situations:

> 'Were it possible that a human creature could grow up to manhood in some solitary place, without any communication with his own species, he could no more think of his own character, of the propriety or demerit of his own sentiments and conduct, of the beauty or deformity of his own mind, than of the beauty or deformity of his own face. All these are objects which he cannot easily see, which naturally he does not look at, and with regard to which he is provided with no mirror which can present them to his view. Bring him into society, and he is immediately provided with the mirror which he wanted before. It is placed in the countenance and behaviour of those he lives with ...' 1

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1. MS, p. 162

Without the social process, without the development of men along general lines, there can be no true growth of the human being, and certainly at best a very limited expression of his true interest. The potential which we possess, therefore, is certainly dependent upon other factors; or, as Millar puts it, we are originally possessed of, or endowed with, only 'the seeds of improvement'[1], which do not germinate spontaneously. It is only by 'long care and culture', by our being free from the pressures of both physical and social limitations, that these seeds are capable of being brought to maturity; it is only through action and social intercourse at any level that these qualities are expressed at all. They do not come into being full-grown, nor can they be said to exist until men act and react; they will always depend for their expression on the society in which we live, and they can never develop beyond this social level.

This thesis, which states further that only situation - political or profound economic limitations - can thwart man's natural inclination towards liberty[2], and that if left to himself his desire to truck, barter or trade will lead him to economic and hence social freedom, is based in part on the commonwealth correlation of property and power, on the relationship between economic independence and personal freedom[3]. The theoretical interpretation of man's

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1. Millar, Origin, p. 198.
2. Ibid,, p. 290.
3. See Appendix B, pp. 526-527.

nature and the power of self-interest, however, goes far beyond the commonwealth concepts of the factors which influenced human actions, and leads the Scottish writers to relate the ideas of development of property extension and economic security to the actual emerging of the characteristic human qualities, and to show in detail the importance of property to social evolution and stability. The commonwealth interpretation rests on the more simple proposition that property determines form of state, and that necessity eliminates the individual. In the theoretical interpretation, on the other hand, there is a detailed study in all stages of development, in all types of society, of how the laws which are the basis of human nature prompted man to act and to achieve certain property situations which determine the extent of individualism and dependence in any society, and determine also the extent of the social qualities[1].

This interpretation not only shows that property forms determine levels of human behaviour, but also indi-

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1. Such study, which considers a much wider variety of social forms than does the commonwealth work, is made possible through the conjectural process, itself an integral part of the theoretical capacity to appreciate the past in its own terms (see above, pp. 16-17). This process was concisely summarised by Stewart in his examination of the development of forms of thought: 'we are under a necessity of supplying the place of fact by conjecture; and when we are unable to ascertain how men have actually conducted themselves upon particular occasions, of considering in what manner they are likely to have proceeded, from the principles of their nature, and the circumstances of their external situation.' (Stewart, Works, X, pp. 33-34). Conjecture is in effect used to supply the 'broken links' in our knowledge of man, to connect the parts in order to form a whole; possessing certain facts gained from observation, we work backwards from the known to what is unknown and attempt to fill in gaps in order to establish new points consonant with the general laws which we have established. See also pp. 340-348 below.

cates how the constant and regular factors that are the characteristics of men are in continual action, and lead gradually, and generally imperceptibly, to other forms of property possession. Hence this explanation emphasises not only 'moral' over physical causes[1], but also the continual operation of man's qualities, the constant change and adaptation to new forms of property - features which overall do distinguish it from the commonwealth work. The gaining of the necessaries of life and later the conveniences, permits a gradual unwinding, a slow maturing, of the capacities inherent in human nature; as the first are achieved, the second will follow. Men 'feel a gradual increase of their wants and are excited with fresh vigour and activity to search for the means of supplying them. The advancement of the more useful arts is followed by the cultivation of those which are subservient to pleasure and entertainment.'[2]

If we consider that man, in changing, develops these propensities, and particularly if we accept that he is dependent on forms of subsistence and the security which these provide for the level of his achievements, then we must also accept that liberty or freedom to act as we ought, cannot really exist in the most primitive stages and that man's propensities are here limited. Such a view of the past does not necessarily deny the relativism which the theoretical writers attempted to introduce into their work but rather stresses that what they see as the most beneficial expressions of human nature (political, because of

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1. See below, pp. 154-161.
2. Millar, Origin, p. 224. See also Hist. View. II, p. 187.

economic, independence) take a considerable time to develop. The levels of justice, the degree of sympathy, and even the extent of benevolence must be impaired or affected by economic uncertainty. They do not exist in any 'absolute' or ideal form at any time, and certainly we cannot see the most refined expressions of such qualities at a time when society is either very individualistic or in considerable disorder:

> 'Many writers appear to take pleasure in remarking that, as the love of liberty is natural to man, it is to be found in the greatest perfection among barbarians, and is apt to be impaired according as people make progress in civilisation and in the arts of life. That mankind, in the state of mere savages, are in great measure unacquainted with government, and unaccustomed to any sort of constraint, is sufficiently evident. But their independence, in that case, is owing to the wretchedness of their circumstances, which afford nothing that can tempt any one man to become subject to another.' 1

The development of the useful and refined arts is a process which is achieved or made possible only upon the establishing of a security of subsistence, an element which is clearly lacking in the savage system: 'A savage finds so much difficulty, and is exposed to so many hardships in procuring even necessaries, that he has no leisure or encouragement to aim at the luxuries and conveniencies of life'[2]; both climate and his own inexperience will affect his economic security and thereby his levels of social interaction. The natural capacity which man has for sympathy or interaction with his fellows is necessarily affected by the level of social behaviour, and in the early stages of life sympathy is extremely inhibited in its de-

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1. Millar, Origin, p. 294.
2. Ibid., p. 183.

velopment. Because of the lack of relationships between men in the earliest stages of society where individuals are concerned with showing their strength rather than admitting their weaknesses, the sympathetic process is here limited to the expression of what are known as the 'awful' virtues - self-denial, self-control, 'that command of the passions which subjects all the movements of our nature to what our dignity and honour, and the propriety of our own conduct, require.'[1] Primitive man[2] is only able to express certain sorts of sentiments because the type of life which he leads only calls forth certain capacities and qualities. His subsistence depends upon the availability of game, life itself depends upon skill and endurance, and death at the hands of enemies is meritorious only if great tortures are accepted with that fortitude[3] which is a necessary part of everyday life:

> 'Every savage undergoes a sort of Spartan discipline, and, by the necessity of his situation, is inured to every sort of hardship. He is in continual danger: he is often exposed to the greatest extremities of hunger, and frequently

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1. MS, p. 26.
2. The primitive societies on which the theoretical historians based most of their interpretation are primarily those of the German barbarians and the American Indians; these they saw as roughly similar, though not identical, the Germans being thought of as somewhat more advanced: see Robertson, Charles V, Works, V, p. 462 (Note VI). Major sources for the study of the German barbarians appear to be Caesar and Tacitus (ibid., pp. 458-462, Note VI).There was a considerable amount of printed material available on the American Indians, and Robertson sought to supplement this by correspondence with the most 'philosophical' of these authors such as de Pinto, Condamine, and Godin le Jeune (see America, Works,IV, pp. 531, 530-531, Notes XXXIV, XLIV,XLVI) particularly in the form of questionnaires: see, for instance, NLS MSS 3954, ff. 11-16, 17-20, 26-34. See also WN, I, p. 366.
3. Smith, MS, p. 297; 'fortitude' is a passive quality as opposed to 'courage' which is more active, and reflects the limited level of sympathy. See also Lectures, pp. 20-21.

> dies of pure want. His circumstances not only habituate him to every sort of distress, but teach him to give way to none of the passions which that distress is apt to excite. He can expect from his countrymen no sympathy or indulgence for such weakness.' 1

In such circumstances the form of sympathy that predominates is that where each individual brings his experiences and attitudes to the level of the society and is accepted only if he does this; the more amiable virtues are only brought out in a less repressive atmosphere. 'Before we can feel much for others, we must in some measure be at ease ourselves', Smith believed[2], and the extent of personal security in savage life was small. As a result, men were unable to 'cultivate the feelings of humanity'[3];

> 'Among civilized nations, the virtues which are founded upon humanity are more cultivated than those which are founded upon self-denial and the command of the passions. Among rude and barbarous nations it is quite otherwise - the virtues of self-denial are more cultivated than those of humanity.' 4

However much any of the more gentle feelings may be present or can even develop in such a system, these cannot be expressed[5]. Their development is necessarily limited by social circumstances, and thus they cannot possibly provide the basis of justice or regular law in this system. Lack of indulgence towards others limits the sympathetic process itself and certain interactions, as well as the feelings on which these are based, that are seen as natural by other societies because they can afford them,

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1. MS, p. 297.
2. Ibid.
3. Millar, Origin, p. 176.
4. Smith, MS, p. 297.
5. Ibid., pp. 298, 300, 302.

are to the savage man both irrelevant and indulgent:

> 'The weakness of love, which is so much indulged in ages of humanity and politeness, is regarded among savages as the most unpardonable effeminacy. Even after the marriage, the two parties seem to be ashamed of a connection which is founded upon so sordid a necessity. They do not live together: they see one another by stealth only: they both continue to dwell in the houses of their respective fathers, and the open cohabitation of the two sexes, which is permitted without blame in all other countries, is here considered as the most indecent and unmanly sensuality.' 1

Such feelings, furthermore, will be seen in all situations. If there is no affection or respect for women, if the society is predominantly one of the male warrior, then it is apposite that the position of the female is proportionately low and in fact is really that of a slave. Marriage in this system is not so much based on sexual desire (which is inhibited and in any event irregular)[2] but on a need for security which is supplied by the family. 'By living at the head of a numerous family' men 'enjoy a degree of ease, respect, and security, of which they would otherwise be deprived, and have reason, in their old age, to expect the assistance and protection of their posterity.'[3] Although marriage exists, then, it is not one of equals; the wife is a servant, paid for and thought of as property, liable to punishment, even torture in some societies.[4]

Such attitudes, however, are neither conscious nor indicative of 'cruelty' but are simply the products of

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1. Smith, MS, p. 298.
2. Millar, Origin, p. 18.
3. Ibid., p. 185.
4. Ibid., p. 197.

society. In a similar fashion we may also see that the position or standing of children in such systems is limited by the economic situation; the greater the difficulty in maintaining life, the more likely it is that whatever 'natural' affection a father may have for his children is thwarted and neglected as are all other emotions of this kind: 'how strongly soever a father may be disposed to promote the happiness of his children, this disposition, in the breast of a savage, is often counteracted by a regard to his own preservation, and smothered by the misery with which he is loaded.'[1] Savages are moved strongly, but by few things and these concern mainly the individual. They have 'no pursuits but such as were suggested by their most immediate wants', they are 'too little acquainted with the dictates of prudence and sober reflection, to be capable of restraining the irregular sallies of passion.'

Prudence and sober reflection are factors which are the prerogatives of the more civilised states, and the precarious means of subsistence that we see in the first stage of society means also that man's capacity or need for certain institutions is also limited. The absence of fixed goods or property in land, for instance, means that there is no need for the forms of government that we ourselves find necessary to protect established wealth, and which can only develop with a true awareness of property as fixed and personal. Scarcity of goods and general communal possession or usage of those goods which exist are characteristics of

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1. Millar, Origin, p. 230.

the savage society that have a profound effect on its notions of law. What government there is is based on the authority of age or talents which is the first form of distinction among men and one eminently natural to this particular stage of growth[1].

In this suggestion the theoretical history emphasises how much 'government' is both a process natural to man and one which develops over a considerable period of time. That form which we see in the savage state, for instance, is clearly rudimentary, perhaps the extension of paternal authority[2], and limited in its responsibilities and powers. It cannot be said to reveal any of the sophistication, any of the ideologies, any of the obviously defined rights and powers that later political theory would claim; while, at the same time, the very existence of these limitations indicates that men have always felt the need for control of some sort. Government and its various forms, therefore, are an expression of need, not the imposition of certain abstract concepts of rights that are seen to be timeless and external to man's situation[3]. Such rights are naturally relevant only to the society concerned and exist only insofar as they can be afforded. In the early stages of social life it is to be seen that men automatically and through need surrender small parts of their liberty to those with either superior strength or superior wisdom because this is part of the social process[4].

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1. Smith, WN, II, p. 233.
2. Millar, Origin, p. 224 and see also p. 234.
3. See below, Chapter VIII.
4. Origin, pp. 246-248.

Indeed, any limitations on men in this stage through government, therefore, cannot be very broad in nature and must relate primarily to external matters rather than to those concerning the society itself. If there is no property to be protected, the laws, such as they are, must apply primarily to individuals. In both the savage and the barbarous society the control over individual members appears to be very limited and all punishment to be appropriate to this although obviously not such as to create what modern man thinks of as stability. For instance, murder which 'ought' to be punished always by death can often be compensated for by money, or through some lesser penalty[1]; and other crimes against men and their freedom are permitted with little restraint. Such laws and customs, Smith believes, although they express the true nature of a precarious society, fall far short of that justice which we ourselves expect and, more importantly, of that which supports the natural course of things:

> 'In some countries, the rudeness and barbarism of the people hinder the natural sentiments of justice from arriving at that accuracy and precision which, in more civilized nations, they naturally attain to. Their laws are, like their manners, gross, and rude, and undistinguishing.' [2]

The change from one form of society to another comes about spontaneously through interest and is expressed in a more developed attitude towards property and other institutions. In the earliest form of society there was no form of land-holding, and all labour, whether expended on hunting or on the caring for subsistence crops, was communal.

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1. Lectures, p. 137.
2. MS, p. 502.

The uncertainty of livelihood and the fluctuation in its procurance meant that stock or capital in goods could play little part in the savage life although it is to be noticed that even here the division of labour is to be found to some degree. While the description of any society at a particular stage may present a static appearance, therefore, we must always remember that man's capacity to progress, his ever-present self-interest, will provide the means by which this stage is eventually superseded by another. That society which is able to progress beyond the limitations of physical causes and to slowly develop its form of government, its level of social interaction, its means of gaining subsistence will eventually be transformed into another stage, such as one in which herding is the major means of subsistence[1].

This is not to say, though, that concepts of property are always changed immediately since many customs continue in force long beyond the time that they are fully appropriate to the society, for man's mind works slowly and the period of transition is a long one: 'the acquisition of wealth in herds and flocks, does not immediately give rise to the idea of property in land. The different families of a tribe are accustomed to feed their cattle promiscuously, and have no separate possession or enjoyment of ground employed for that purpose.'[2] Thus the herding community is in effect still one large family, still, to some considerable extent, devoid of any sophisticated notions

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1. Lectures, pp. 107-108.
2. Origin, p. 251.

of government because there is little need for these. Its members retain the love of virtually unrestricted freedom that characterises the savage state, and their forms of allegiance are personal rather than concerned with any developed concept of state's needs. There is, of course, some variation in behaviour between the two according to the extent to which the barbarians are aware of property as fixed, and yet the theoretical interpretation necessarily stresses also how much the general principles of the herding stage will mean a similarity in behaviour between one form of barbarianism and another. Thus Robertson, in examining the history of the German tribes who were eventually to establish the basic feudal system, saw some resemblance between these Germans and the American Indian; and the similarity between the informal yet strong connections of family or kin in the German tribes, and the Scottish highlanders' system of relationship did not go unnoticed. What could be learnt from contemporary societies as well as from reliable older accounts provided the basis of comparison and of the conclusions concerning the nature of particular stages of growth.

In these types of society, for instance, it was believed that the continuation of family or kinship ties necessarily limited the power of the form of government, and both institutions were created by the existence of moveable as opposed to stable or fixed property. While there were divisions within groups, therefore, each of these coalesced into a single unit and loyalty was given to a leader, sometimes continuously or on isolated occasions, as the individ-

ual chose. The centralisation which did exist, therefore, was that primarily created by the existence of heads of tribes or families, and was not based on the authority of a king: a situation which was to be repeated in the feudal process itself. The kinship system or the tribe provided for its members in such a fashion as to make other more formal institutions unnecessary. Benevolence, or regard for those with whom we have had habitual close contact, for instance, is not only clearly more developed in this stage than in the savage, but is also the means by which wrongs are righted and the micro-community ruled. Only later, with the development of justice as a more impersonal institution does this aspect of benevolence die out. The sympathetic process which has clearly made known the duties of the members of such a system can no longer express that which the society itself does not need.

The third stage of man's progress, in the theoretical interpretation, is that of agricultural production on a consistent level which leads to a more highly developed sense of the nature of property, that is, its being fixed and its being an individual possession:

> 'The improvement of agriculture, which in most parts of the world has been posterior to the art of taming and rearing cattle, is productive of very important alterations in the state of society ... it obliges men to fix their residence in the neighbourhood of that spot where their labour is chiefly to be employed, and thereby gives rise to property in land, the most valuable and permanent species of wealth.' 1

The communal form of property that we see in the barbaric herding stage and which is a vital part of the development

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1. Millar, Origin, p. 208.

of man's sense of property, gradually gives way to individual possession, thereby leading to one of the most important stages in the evolution of man and his fundamental characteristics[1]. This is so because it is particularly through the concept of property in labour and in land that the major expressions of the laws of economic development are made possible. The freedom which we have as self-interested individuals to both act and to retain the fruits of our labour is the means by which security and hence social stability is made possible on a regular basis. The individual begins to exist or ought to only when his natural interest provides concrete dividends[2].

'Every one', wrote Millar, 'is desirous of employing his own labour for his own advantage, and of having a separate possession which he may enjoy according to his own inclination'[3]; and it was only when man was free to do so that the relationship between freedom and economic benefit existed in any meaningful sense and the society prospered through the expression of interest. Labour is in fact the first form of property[4], and as such must always meet with its proper return which is individual benefit. This is a necessary part of the rights of man whether these are original and personal or acquired and real. Both are natural in that they are vital to the proper and most beneficial organization of society even if those rights pertaining to

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1. See Robertson, America, Works, IV, pp. 299, 339.
2. Origin, pp. 252-253.
3. Ibid., p. 252.
4. WN, I, p. 136.

physical freedom may be more obvious than those concerning property which do not develop until the idea of property itself exists.[1]

These rights, furthermore, ought to be the inheritance of every man, not just of the few or of the powerful, for society consists of the many and not the few: 'To hurt in any degree the interest of any one order of citizens, for no other purpose but to promote that of some other, is evidently contrary to that justice and equality of treatment which the sovereign owes to all the different orders of his subjects.'[2] While sophisticated notions of rights and privileges may depend on the actual development of the philosophical society, therefore, the right of self-interest exists always; and while any given form of property may reflect very limited awareness of both personal and property rights and a rudimentary system of property holding, it is nonetheless true that the inhibition of man's natural return for labour will severely affect the actual production and morale of the worker[3]. The natural course of things is always predominant.

This dictum holds true for the feudal state as well as for the commercial system: 'In the inferior employments, the sweets of labour consist altogether in the recompence of labour. They who are soonest in a position to enjoy the sweets of it, are likely soonest to conceive a relish for

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1. Lectures, p. 8; see also William D. Grampp, Economic Liberalism (New York, 1965) II, pp. 21-22.
2. WN, II, p. 171; see also ibid., p. 95.
3. See Joseph J. Spengler, 'Adam Smith's Theory of Economic Growth', SEJ, XXV, XXVI (1959) pp. 397-415, 1-12.

it, and to acquire the early habit of industry.'[1] Any form of government which denies the worker his natural end thereby reduces his incentive and his interest in working. The natural spirit is dulled, and the inventiveness and interest which might have been produced is irretrievably lost[2], a process which we can see particularly in slavery both ancient and modern[3], The laws of economic relationships are always constant and the responses of the American and the Roman slave are fundamentally the same:

> 'A slave, who receives no wages in return for his labour, can never be supposed to exert much vigour or activity in the exercise of any employment. He obtains a livelihood at any rate; and by his utmost assiduity he is able to procure no more.' 4

We can also see the same situation, the theoretical writers believe, in the early stages of individual property holding in Europe where a similar monopoly of land by a few leads to the economic dependence of the many, a process in which both economic and personal rights are severely affected and many of the uncertainties of the earliest stages of life are reproduced. While actual form of subsistence may be more certain because of the concrete advances in agriculture and the stability of land possession, the dependence of the ordinary man on the will of his master necessarily inhibits his social responses. Having no security in his own livelihood, he is necessarily vulnerable to those who have stability. Dependence, as Harrington and the commonwealth writers emphasised, limited one's

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1. WN, I, p. 137.
2. Ibid., p. 90; see also Millar, Origin, p. 320.
3. WN, I, p. 411, II, p. 205.
4. Origin, p. 299; see also pp. 302, 317.

freedom of behaviour, a thesis which the theoretical writers adopted and developed in terms of its effects on man's nature. The division of land in the feudal system into large areas controlled by the individual lord, the gradual control by him of all others and the dependence of the economy on the labour of the depressed classes, is, indeed, an entirely normal response, even a natural one given the economic and social development of the occupying society and the particular geographic conditions. Yet, at the same time, this particular expression of man's natural impulses, of interest as yet unrestrained by any advanced concept of justice, clearly interferes with interest, with the natural return of labour, with the usual correlation between work and benefit - at least so far as the labouring classes are concerned. In feudalism the 'most sacred and inviolable' form of property is violated as an integral part of the state's operation. Men are no longer free agents as they once were in the savage and barbarian societies; and yet, while subordination, differences in rank and wealth are a natural expression of development, the degree of subordination in feudalism not only fails to replace a natural freedom with a certain amount of stability but constantly reinforces the debilitating effects of economic and moral dependence:

> 'persons of low rank, have no opportunity of acquiring an affluent fortune, or of raising themselves to superior stations; and remaining for ages in a state of dependence, they naturally contract such dispositions and habits as are suited to their circumstances.' 1

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1. Millar, Origin, p. 290; see also Smith, WN, I, p. 355.

If men are forced to work for others and are unable both to choose their own employment and to receive the fruits of this, this denial of the natural rights of men will have obvious effects on the actual productivity of the feudal state itself: 'if great improvements are seldom to be expected from great proprietors, they are least of all to be expected when they employ slaves for their workmen ... A person who can acquire no property, can have no other interest but to eat as much, and to labour as little as possible.'[1] The division of land into large areas is economically unprofitable in that agriculture demands relatively small areas for the best form of cultivation, and demands also free labour. But not only did the feudal system itself destroy the usual return of labour, and the steady progress of agricultural improvement, it also interfered with the natural pattern of advance of economic pursuits which, in Smith's view at least, must mean that the arts of convenience are based on the economic strength of the arts of necessity:

> 'As subsistence is, in the nature of things, prior to conveniency and luxury, so the industry which procures the former, must necessarily be prior to that which ministers to the latter. The cultivation and improvement of the country, therefore, which affords subsistence, must, necessarily, be prior to the increase of the town, which furnishes only the means of conveniency and luxury.' 2

This interference with the natural course of things affects all the institutions in the society, and limits the growth of men, not only in economic but also in social terms.

If we interpret the feudal system in light of the prin-

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1. Smith, WN, I, p. 411.
2. WN, I, p. 402.

ciples which Smith laid down in Moral Sentiments it is obvious that there is only one form of morality in the state and it is one which is of general benefit to most of the lords and their families, but only to these. Thrift and prudence, insofar as they might be seen to exist in a system where men attempt to do little and to avoid much, bring no rewards, and the more obviously 'virtuous' system is clearly beneficial only in the commercial society[1]. In feudalism it is the lord who is omnipotent, and who controls the lives not only of the serfs but also of those slightly above them[2]; and such is the nature of man, Smith believes, that this system was one which pleased the lords' sense of superiority as well as providing the labour by which they lived: 'The pride of man makes him love to domineer, and nothing mortifies him so much as to be obliged to condescend to persuade his inferiors. Wherever the law allows it, and the nature of thework can afford it, therefore, he will generally prefer the service of slaves to that of freemen.'[3] The morality of the feudal state is that which is concerned with the gaining of status and respect, and the maintaining of this through means which are not of particular benefit to the economic stability of the society as a whole. The particular nature of man which leads him to desire the respect of his peers, the particular expression of benevolence that concerns a strong interest for class and group position are clearly those which are most dominant here; and although we may assume some similar process of sympathy

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1. See above, pp. 60-66.
2. WN, I, p. 355.
3. Ibid., p. 412.

in the lower classes, despite their situation, the conjectural process is not much used either by Smith or Millar to supplement our guesses: such sympathy, however, would presumably be limited by the depressed state of the working population.

If the lords as dominant members of the society are able to act as they please, they certainly will not need to moderate their feelings or actions in order to gain sympathy because the responses of the remainder of society are irrelevant. They can only be concerned with their own standing vis-a-vis their fellows, and hence any modification of the general chaos and instability can result only from changes in property as they are reflected in the sympathetic process. The form of government as it is, is concerned merely to conserve that power division which exists: 'Civil government, so far as it is instituted for the security of property, is in reality instituted for the defence of the rich against the poor, or of those who have some property against those who have none at all'[1]; and the form of justice that results is that which is determined by the powerful.

While it might be said, then, that the kinship system which we see in feudalism provides certain securities for its members, it does so in terms which are formed by the nature of the situation. Justice is uncertain and individualistic, and those to whom it is applied have little say in its formation[2]. Benevolence is what any society

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1. WN, II, p. 236; see also Lectures, p. 15.
2. WN, I, pp. 435-436; similar types of institutions may also be seen in the allodial system: ibid., p. 435.

deems to be so and a relationship brought about by proximity does not necessarily lead to any expression of charity or moderation outside of that imposed by necessity: 'a tenant at will, who possesses land sufficient to maintain his family for little more than a quit-rent, is as dependent upon the proprietor as any servant or retainer whatever, and must obey him with as little reserve.'[1] Justice, or the laws of society, based as they are on the division of land, will always support the lords' interests:

> 'Upon the authority which the great proprietors necessarily had in such a state of things over their tenants and retainers, was founded the power of the ancient barons. They necessarily became the judges in peace, and the leaders in war, of all who dwelt upon their estates. They could maintain order and execute the law within their respective demesnes, because each of them could there turn the whole force of all the inhabitants against the injustice of any one. No other person had sufficient authority to dothis.'[2]

Because of this the greater part of the information we receive concerning the effect of property divisions concerns mainly the upper classes of the feudal system. The condition of women, for instance, through the increase of security, must change from that uncertainty and inferiority which is natural to the savage system, and:

> 'is naturally improved by every circumstance which tends to create attention to the pleasures of sex, and to increase the value of those occupations which are suited to the female character; by the cultivation of the arts; by the advancement of opulence; by the gradual refinement of taste and manners.' 3

It is only when material security improves that we can expect the sentiments of men to change. For instance, as the

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1. WN, I, p. 435.
2. Ibid.,
3. Origin, p. 203.

unfortunate lot of women in earlier systems resulted from the insecurity of subsistence, it is apparent that with the development of agriculture and the greater availability of food there will be a relaxation of the constant pressure to survive, and thus different attitudes towards marriage will emerge. This must be particularly true as far as the lord himself is concerned as he takes no active part in the procurement of subsistence: it is something which is owed to him. The greater personal freedom which some men acquire through this change provides the atmosphere for the unfolding of particular human qualities; and the violence and hatred natural to men are confined to those concerns outside of the domestic where they still continue to be necessary. Hence, in the upper classes we may note a freedom to 'obtain those pleasures to which they are prompted by their natural appetites.'[1]

At the same time, however, these same feelings or passions are also limited by other expressions of the feudal system. The greater the opportunities and the fewer the inhibitions because of the form of subsistence, the greater also are the social restrictions on fulfilling these natural desires. Women become something to be cherished, not despised, and they gain greater status through being increasingly unavailable. Considerations of class, of inter-family disputes, all arising from property distinctions and the idea of property itself, mean a consequent deprivation as considerable in its effects as the restrict-

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1. Origin, p. 209; see also Hist. View, I, pp. 116-125.

ions of the savage system: 'The introduction of wealth, and the distinction of ranks with which it is attended, must interrupt the communication of the sexes, and, in many cases, render it difficult for them to gratify their wishes.'[1] Such restraints, nonetheless, are of benefit; the sentiments of honour which mark feudal chivalry as well as also distinguishing private warfare, led to a respect, to a 'veneration' and an 'utmost purity of manners' which enhanced the value of those who were the objects of them[2]. In the feudal system some restraints of the feelings and passions are a reflection of the property basis.

While it is true that the lack of stock in the feudal system limited the capacity for growth[3], and the feudal stage as a whole appears to be a destructive and inhibiting one, it is nonetheless to be established through observation that it itself is a stage in the human development which gives way to another, more sophisticated one, and that this change, expressed through another form of property distribution, is a further expression of the self-interest natural to man. The human process is one which is in constant action even though this may not be apparent at particular times within any one stage. At the same time as the great feudal lords dominate vast areas of land, the forces which will lead to the gradual breakdown of this are already beginning to move, imperceptibly perhaps but nonetheless steadily.

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1. Origin, p. 210.
2. Ibid., p. 214.
3. WN, I, p. 410.

This change, of course, is not an automatic process; if conditions had not existed that permitted European men to derive benefit from particular changes such as the crusades, the opening up of new trade routes, and so on, it is apparent that feudalism itself would have continued to dominate as long as the division of land remained the same; and it is to be seen in certain of the theoretical works that variations within particular societies are accounted for through the lack of such opportunities or through particular restrictions which limit change itself. On the whole, however, the theoretical concern is mainly with the usual or normal, with showing certain general trends that lead to the fourth stage of man's development.

This is not to deny, of course, that Smith especially is concerned to point out the particular factors characteristic of feudalism itself, as distinct from agricultural societies per se, that lead to deviations from the usual correlation between land and returns for labour. As a part of this investigation of the deviation from the natural course of things he points out that 'if human institutions had never thwarted those natural inclinations'[1], the relationship between town and country would never have been upset. Yet at the same time he indicates that the force of human interest will also be able to overcome such departures from the norm, and it is this process which he traces in some detail. The regeneration of commerce because of the crusades brought about the independence of the Italian

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1. WN, I, pp. 402-403.

cities at least[1], and even those societies which were unable to participate in commerce to this extent nonetheless also developed independent cities that were a check to the power of the feudal lords. Interest unintentionally provides the correction to the distortions of the natural.

In the theoretical viewpoint, the development of commerce in the towns is of particular importance in that it creates a new form of property which is extended to a much wider proportion of the population than the feudal division of land allowed. While men may have been denied the natural rights of the fruits of their labour under the feudal system, those members of the society who have broken away from the land, who form the population of the towns and cities, who establish the trades and arts which provide the luxuries of life, achieve a form of independence through this property and are able to retain all the benefits of it. The division of labour is not possible in agriculture[2], an occupation demanding merely a general knowledge; it is developed to a greater extent only within the arts and leads to a production of goods that maintains an opulence that permeates society. This, in turn, gives an increased security to the general population, thereby affecting their degree of emotional response[3].

When the more natural freedom of man to act is restored,

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1. WN, I, pp. 418 ff; Hist. View, II, Chapters VII and VIII. This process was considered in some detail by Robertson in the View: Charles V, Works, V, pp. 65 ff. See below, Chapter VI.
2. WN, I, pp. 7-10, 17; see also Milton L. Myers, 'Division of Labour as a Principle of Social Cohesion', CJEPS, XXXIII (1967) pp. 438-439;
3. WN, I, pp. 410, 441.

therefore, the heterogeneous process is able to create more considerable benefits, and the laws of economic return are, at least theoretically, once more in operation. By far the most interesting aspect of this change, at least from the viewpoint of relating Moral Sentiments to the Wealth of Nations, is the manner in which the growing wealth of the towns led to the decline in the power of the aristocracy[1]. If the feudal lords were once remarkable for their spending within their income[2], this was not the result of any automatic prudence or restraint - qualities which are part of the ordinary morality - but because the goods available were extremely limited. The lords, in accordance with the dictates of feudal policy, spent their wealth in such a manner as to retain their power, on their supporters or on the maintenance of their lands. When the manufactures of the city became available to them, however, they changed from this unconsciously prudent, self-preserving policy and did so because of their very nature. Their desire for the respect of their fellows, for status and position, led them to turn to the new means of demonstrating their wealth and this tendency became a characteristic of such classes. Never having been accustomed to the 'ordinary' virtues concomitant with working for one's livelihood, it was not extraordinary for them to continue their more frivolous life along lines that were to become as much a part of their customs as war and violence had been:

> 'To improve land with profit, like all other

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1. See Hist. View, II, pp. 378-384.
2. WN, I, pp. 410, 441.

> 'commercial projects, requires an exact attention to small savings and small gains, of which a man born to a great fortune, even though naturally frugal, is very seldom capable. The situation of such a person naturally disposes him to attend rather to ornament which pleases his fancy, than to profit for which he has so little occasion. The elegance of his dress, of his equipage, of his house, and household furniture, are objects which from his infancy he has been accustomed to have some anxiety about.' 1

This particular characteristic of the aristocracy led them to search for new capital, to be rid of former encumbrances and duties, even though these were in fact the basis of their long-term power. They began this process by disposing of limited rights and even possessions to those who had formerly been under their control, thereby breaking down that dependence which had had such deleterious effects on the development of man's qualities. The new independence of property possession[2], added to the improvements in agriculture which had taken place, meant a more beneficial operation of the land through the usual relationship of freedom and production[3]; and the extension of this particular form of property to a greater number at the same time that a new form of property (goods) was achieving increasing importance, obviously meant a gradual change in the balance, because in the distribution, of property. The constant desire for status and for respect on the part of the lords, a process in which they were once able to indulge without detriment to themselves, was the very means in the emerging commercial state of their downfall. It was a change, above all, the theoretical writers emphasise,

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1. WN, I, p. 410; see also II, p. 317. See above, pp.60-66.
2. Hist. View, I, pp. 136-139, 312, 313; II, pp. 182-207.
3. Ibid., p. 383.

which did not result from plan or foresight, but simply from the combination of interest and the natural expression of benevolence appropriate to this class: 'what all the violence of the feudal institutions could never have effected, the silent and insensible operation of foreign commerce and manufactures gradually brought about.'[1] Lacking that prudence which enables man to look forward, a prudence which is only developed in a society which has a tradition of constant self-control and limitation that is noticeably absent in the feudal state, the limited self-interest of the aristocracy provided the means by which it destroyed itself:

> 'A revolution of the greatest importance to the public happiness, was in this manner brought about by two different orders of people, who had not the least intention to serve the public. To gratify the most childish vanity was the sole motive of the great proprietors. The merchants and artificers, much less ridiculous, acted merely from a view to their own interest, and in pursuit of their own pedlar principle of turning a penny wherever a penny was to be got. Neither of them had any knowledge or foresight of that great revolution which the folly of the one, and the industry of the other, was gradually bringing about.
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> It is thus that through the greater part of Europe the commerce and manufactures of the cities, instead of being the effect, have been the cause and occasion of the improvement and cultivation of the country. This order, however, being contrary to the natural course of things, is necessarily both slow and uncertain.' 2

The particular importance of this heterogeneous process is that it achieves the political, because it creates the economic, independence of a greater part of the population. As the theoretical writers point out in their study of the earlier ages of social growth, the degree of freedom

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1. WN, I, p. 437.
2. Ibid., pp. 440-441; Hist. View, II, pp. 188-189.

given to the individual is the means by which his natural self-interest operates, providing that all other factors are equal; and it is noticeable in this interpretation that earlier ages have either had an excess of liberty, or an equal excess of the invasion of true liberty. Both of these limit the development of the society, preventing man from achieving that property on which his personal security and political freedom depends, and thereby limiting the extent to which he can afford the sentiments of humanity. The development of the arts and the possession of land by small property holders, however, necessarily changes this situation through making a measure of independence possible to all. The small landowner is his own master and is able to retain the fruits of his labour[1]. The craftsman possesses property in his trade, and the nature of this is such that the success of his undertaking does not depend so much on the will of the customer because his customers are many and the effects of the will of one are limited. This situation differs from that of the limited feudal society in which the uncertain will of the single lord was the determining force that affected the whole of a man's life. 'Each tradesman or artificer derives his subsistence from the employment, not of one, but of a hundred or a thousand different customers. Though in some measure obliged to them all, therefore, he is not absolutely dependent upon any one of them.'[2]

The breakdown of the feudal system is clearly of the

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1. See WN, I, pp. 432-433, and Hist. View, I, pp. 316-317.
2. WN, I, p. 438; see also Origin, p. 295.

greatest importance in the theoretical history, for it is the means by which human nature may come more into its own, This spirit of liberty, which is natural to man, has been engendered by the freeing of the mind from the insecurity and dependence characteristic of feudalism; and is supported by an extension of property to a greater number, property which transfers to other classes a proportionate share in political power:

> 'It may in general be observed that, according as men have made greater progress in commerce and the arts, the establishment of domestic freedom is of greater importance; and that, in opulent and polished nations, its influence extends to the great body of the people, who form the principle part of a community, and whose comfortable situation ought never to be overlooked in the provisions that are made for national happiness and prosperity.' 1

The re-distribution of property arising through commerce and through the actual changes in land-holding which commerce has caused indirectly, have meant that political power and the nature of the government must change accordingly. The original alliance with the king that the towns were obliged to make, gradually gives way to a greater independence and to the political power of these towns based on their wealth[2]. And their right to administer the finances of the state, gained because they represent those who provide this money, grants to them a considerable authority, at least in theory. The general pattern may indeed always be upset by the particular history of a state[3], and the

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1. Origin, p. 316.
2. WN, I, p. 424; Origin, pp. 313-314; Hist. View, II, pp. 199-205.
3. This variation is traced by Robertson particularly, in the View, Section III, Charles V, Works, V, pp. 104-163.

emergence of the democratical element is really only the beginning of the history of the modern state[1]; nonetheless, it is a change which is of considerable importance to the development of man's nature.

The emphasis on the unintended or heterogeneous development of modern society is a vital part of the theoretical philosophy particularly because of the role of the unphilosophical in the emergence of what we call enlightened society, and because such an interpretation emphasises the role of interest in the creation and the maintenance of this society. As Smith had pointed out, the morality peculiar to the aristocracy was one which was not economically productive, especially because of the basis of the labour that worked the feudal estates. With the change in property form and holding, however, and in the nature of the government that was based on this, the rights of men were in part at least restored, and a more profitable form of morality was introduced. The merchant, for instance, whose wealth may enable him to buy property from one of the old feudal families, brings with him the qualities which are natural to his business pursuits and applies them to his management of land. He seeks not so much the ephemeral, as the lords did, the beautification of himself or his estate, but its profitable operation; and his interest is of benefit to the society as a whole:

> 'Merchants are commonly ambitious of becoming country gentlemen, and when they do, they are generally the best of all improvers. A merchant is accustomed to employ his money chiefly in

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1. Millar, Origin, p. 292.

> 'profitable projects; whereas a mere country gentleman is accustomed to employ it chiefly in expence. The one often sees his money go from him and return to him again with a profit: the other, when once he parts with it, very seldom expects to see any more of it ... The habits ... of order, economy and attention, to which mercantile business naturally forms a merchant, render him much fitter to execute, with profit and success, any project of improvement.' 1

With the development of the arts and crafts, with the free ownership of land in the country, maintained by political power, there was an independence that permitted a level of economic production that was formerly impossible and made it easier for man to gain respect and status through possession of material goods. As Smith in particular has indicated, this is not to say that men become more abstractly or ideally 'virtuous' since the values of thrift and so on are related only to the economic advance of the individual and hence of the society. It is rather that the general level of behaviour which is necessary if the middle and lower classes are to advance is such that it heterogeneously produces particular social benefits through the necessary inculcation of prudence, hard work and self-control - qualities which we think of as 'virtues'. Here especially is the 'misguided' desire for status and place the main motive of human actions. Our wish to gain the respect and sympathy of our fellows, our constant desire to be in such a position as will lead man's natural identification with success to endow us with social approval, is the basis of our action. And it is a part of the natural order of things that the ordinary man cannot gain this approval in the manner which

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1. WN, I, pp. 432-433.

the upper classes can. If he were so misguided as to attempt this, he would certainly be economically and also socially destroyed; thus it is only through the virtues which are natural to our particular situation that we may in fact attain position, the sympathy of our fellows, the approval of the impartial spectator, and, at the same time, increase the security of our society, a factor which leads to continuing, if unintended, developments. Once property is instituted on a rightful and natural basis, therefore, it will ordinarily lead to a constant increase in wealth and public benefit; a benefit which is achieved through many virtues that would not have been accepted by earlier writers but which is nonetheless real and solid in the view of the theoretical writers. Necessity, they feel, produces greater ends than benevolence.

This is a process which Smith traces in some detail in Wealth of Nations, as an integral part of his belief that the natural course of things will produce a society that is economically flourishing, and that any interference with this process will lead to a perversion of the relationship between freedom and the highest production. There is, he believes, a necessary relationship between the general industry and the capital which employs it and this should not be tampered with in order to favour one segment of the population, either concerning the trade between two or more nations or the domestic economy itself[1]. If this is done there is a denial of the rights of man as severe as that which we have seen to exist in the feudal

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1. WN, I, p. 479.

system:

> 'Though ... a landed nation should be able to raise up artificers, manufacturers and merchants of its own, somewhat sooner than it could do by the freedom of trade; a matter, however, which is not a little doubtful; yet it would raise them up, if one may say so, prematurely, and before it was perfectly ripe for them.' 1

All gains and development ought to be natural and made in proportion to the capacities of the society as it is at any given period. A temporary advantage gained through forcing the rate of growth is not really an advantage at all if we look at it in the philosophical manner, from our awareness, through observation, of the laws which govern all of human society. As man ought to control his present desires for his future interest, so also should any state prevent the passing of laws which tend to upset the natural rhythm and to interfere with its real, steady, and appropriate gains: 'All systems either of preference or of restraint, therefore, being thus completely taken away, the obvious and simple system of natural liberty establishes itself of its own accord.'[2]

The principle of self-interest, it is to be observed, will have an automatic levelling effect on industry within and without the state so that such regulations which are imposed through monopolies, bounties, commercial treaties or whatever, are not only detrimental to the rights of the many and a direct invasion of them, but, quite simply, are also unnecessary. What is good for one will be good for the society providing the true laws of justice exist: 'the

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1. WN, II, p. 193; see also ibid., pp. 113, 197.
2. Ibid., p. 208.

private interests and passions of individuals naturally dispose them to turn their stock towards the employments which in ordinary cases are most advantageous to the society.'[1] The same tendency leads man to invest his capital in the most advantageous manner and it will produce an appropriate return not only to himself but also to the population as a whole, a factor which applies also to ordinary labour. Economic 'laws' are valid in all cases:

> 'The whole of the advantages and disadvantages of the different employments of labour and stock must, in the same neighbourhood, be either perfectly equal or continually tending to equality. If in the same neighbourhood, there was any employment evidently either more or less advantageous than the rest, so many people would crowd into it in the one case, and so many would desert it in the other, that its advantages would soon return to the level of other employments. This at least would be the case, where there was perfect liberty, and where every man was perfectly free both to chuse what occupation he thought proper, and to change it as often as he thought proper.' 2

Similarly, in a society which has been allowed to proceed normally and in that which has made the necessary adjustments through the strength of self-interest, a man will invest his capital first in domestic industry and to his own profit[3]; and in doing so, in advancing his own interest, he must necessarily advance that of the society in general:

> 'He generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. By preferring the support of domestic to that of foreign industry, he intends only his own security; and by directing that interest in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention.' 4

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1. WN, II, pp. 145-146.
2. Ibid., I, p. 111.
3. Ibid., pp. 475, 477-478.
4. Ibid., p. 477.

'Wherever capital predominates, industry prevails: wherever revenue, idleness'[1]; thus the productive use and continuance of capital must always advance the society, however automatically. The continuation of the virtue of self-love must encourage the inclination to act, to barter, and through this the division of labour is developed in order to produce those improvements which not only increase the goods of the commercial society but also tend to lower their price in relation to the income of any given labourer[2]: 'It is the natural effect of improvement ... to diminish gradually the real price of almost all manufactures.'[3] The operation of the natural process of morality common to the ordinary man will mean both public benefit and the achievement of those goals which are dear to the heart of those who desire to be a part of society and to interact with their fellows.

We may also see that,in the theoretical philosophy, the development of commerce as a form of property has considerable effects on the domestic relationships of man, and enables the restrictions on the growth of the sentiments of humanity to be lifted. If men are affected in their family relationships, as well as in those with their fellows, by the repression of natural feelings, it is apparent that the freeing of them from the dependence on the will of others and the restoration of the natural rights will profoundly affect the extent to which they are free to treat their own dependants in a more generous manner.

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1. WN, I, p. 358.
2. Ibid., p. 275.
3. Ibid., p. 269.

If Smith has indicated that benevolence comes not so much from natural passions, but from prolonged close contact between particular groups of persons, it is also to be seen that this close contact can only produce what the general level of the society makes possible. If the process of sympathy is limited in its operation, if the concepts of justice are oppressive because of the feudal powers, for instance, if insecurity of position restricts the human responses, then benevolence in the earlier stages of development must necessarily be of a very limited type. It may extend to the identification of dominant groups (such as the nobility) with each other, it may also lead to the extension of favour and rights from the lord to all those who are a part of the kinship system, but it can hardly be seen to operate in the more 'unselfish' aspects. It is only when there is civil freedom, then, and men become individuals, that they are free to act as such, and only then that freedom is extended to all persons in proportion to the degree that situation makes this possible.

As both Smith and Millar indicate in some detail, the general situation of the society will determine the particular laws and customs that affect the role of both women and children, and also of servants. When government gives considerable powers to the husband, father, or master, either directly or because of its lack of control over individuals, those persons under the command of the individual father or master must be dependent on his will and on the favour of others for any moderation of this. If such moderation or intervention is not a part of the normal social

attitude then the position of such persons is little better than that of slaves[1]. It is only with the breakdown of feudalism, the increase of security and the freedom from the arbitrary and capricious will of others that resulted from this, that a greater personal independence could be extended to all members of the community and this could be reflected in the attitude towards women and children. If the condition of women is improved by the greater freedom of the men and the certainty produced by self-interest operating with less restriction, then those freedoms allowed to the upper-class women of the feudal period can be extended to a greater number.

These freedoms, however, will necessarily be of a different kind in keeping with the vast changes in the nature of the state; chivalry, being the product of an earlier form of government, must eventually, if slowly, die out[2]. The increasing importance of the merchant and trading class, to which the militaristic virtues were foreign, led gradually to a change in customs and to the development of those more appropriate to the new class. Security, mobility and independence meant the emergence of trust and peace within the family and in the relationships with others: 'the advancement of people in manufactures and commerce has a natural tendency to remove those circumstances which prevented the free intercourse of the sexes, and contributed to heighten and inflame their passions.'[3] It

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1. Smith, Lectures, p. 94.
2. Millar, Origin, p. 209.
3. Ibid., pp. 218-219.

is in this society, then, that the talents which women do have, the qualities which are distinctively theirs, are valued; this situation marks a very clear distinction between this and earlier societies[1]. In comparison especially with the savage society it is those qualities and talents which are peculiar to women which are respected, and while we may consider the nature of marriage in some earlier ages to have been 'imperfect', 'limited' and not 'fully established', we cannot say the same of the modern form[2]. Because of man's nature, marriage must be something other than a master/servant relationship or a contract between a superior and an inferior; it must be rather a relationship between equals, Millar believes, and one in which the different qualities of the two partners are taken into consideration. Thus it is only in the commercial state which permits a greater emotional, because physical, security that a true appreciation of women as individuals can arise, that marriage can be wholly natural:

> 'In this situation, the women become, neither the slaves, nor the idols of the other sex, but the friends and companions. The wife obtains that rank and station which appears most agreeable to reason, being suited to her character and talents.' 3

We may also trace a similar attitude towards the position of children in the commercial society, the paternal authority being reduced within narrower bounds[4]. Children, Millar believes, have rights like all other mem-

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1. See above, especially pp. 85-86, 99-101.
2. Origin, p. 199.
3. Ibid., p. 219.
4. Lectures, p. 91.

bers of society and these rights must be observed[1]. While parents may love their children automatically, while they may have a 'natural affection' and a 'humanity'[2] in regard to them, this should not be exploited to the detriment of the child. As much as men in general have, or ought to have, a freedom from oppression from the sovereign, so also ought children to have the right to love and obey their parents with moderation[3]. As has been indicated above, the situation of earlier societies necessarily had detrimental effects on the nature of the father/child relationship, those children who could not be supported being left to die, and the 'normal' feelings of parents being non-existent or impossible of fulfillment[4]. Only when society is based on more solid principles do the harsh necessities of another stage give way to the 'natural'; the father in more tolerable circumstances is able to be 'himself', to fulfil his natural duties as a parent:

> 'By living in affluence and security, he is more at leisure to exert the social affections, and to cultivate those arts which tend to soften and humanize the temper. Being often engaged in the business and conversation of the world, and finding, in many cases, the necessity of conforming to the humours of those with whom he converses, he becomes less impatient of contradiction, and less apt to give way to the irregular sallies of passion. His parental affection, though not perhaps more violent, becomes at least more steady and uniform.' 5

If the feelings which developed in security were more natural than those which existed prior to this, Millar also

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1. Origin, p. 243.
2. Ibid., p. 241.
3. Ibid., p. 243.
4. Ibid., p. 230.
5. Ibid., p. 316.

believes that we must also see as 'imperfect' those systems which demanded too great a respect, love and obedience from their children; hence, we must learn that the natural is the moderate, in this case at least. He concedes that it is natural that the earliest form of authority and power is derived from that respect which men give to the experience and knowledge which comes from or is associated with age[1], and it is natural also that this respect is extended to fathers[2]. Yet it is an attitude which has often been exploited and this exploitation limits the development of the individual, in much the same manner, we may suppose, that the dependence of men in feudalism limits their own growth. Any laws which grant excessive power to parents, then, must be seen as an 'abuse' of the natural, and demand 'correction'[3]. When the commercial society brings security and individuality, this independence will be recognised; and children will no longer need to depend on their parents either emotionally or materially:

> 'The children, at an early period of life, are obliged to leave their home, in order to be instructed in those trades and professions by which it is proposed they should earn a livelihood, and afterwards to settle in those parts of the country which they find convenient for prosecuting their several employments. By this alteration of circumstances they are emancipated from their father's authority. They are put in a condition to procure a maintenance without having recourse to his bounty, and by their own labour and industry are frequently possessed of opulent fortunes.'[4]

Smith, whose opinions differ in some details from those of Millar, believes that the process of benevolence itself

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1. Origin, pp. 230-231; see above, p. 87.
2. Ibid., p. 232.
3. Ibid., p. 241.
4. Ibid., p. 241.

is necessarily affected by the commercial society; so that, far from having too much authority over their children, for instance, modern parents are unconsciously permitting a situation in which the bonds that we have come to think of as natural are being gradually destroyed. The erosion of the ties between parents and children means that contact is maintained only through a rather cool, detached, and 'dutiful' response, and that if we wish to maintain the older, more traditional actions, we must move away from the tradition of educating our children away from their home:

> 'Do you wish to educate your children to be dutiful to their parents, to be kind and affectionate to their brothers and sisters? put them under necessity of being dutiful children, of being kind affectionate brothers and sisters: educate them in your own house.' 1

'Respect for you', he believes, 'must always impose a very useful restraint upon their conduct; and respect for them may frequently impose no useless restraint upon your own.'[2] In this way does Smith point out what is not always obvious in Millar's work, that the advances of the commercial society also bring many problems and can lead to a denial of the nature of things as effectively as earlier stages. Interest is a constant force, and the manner in which it is expressed, its reflection in sympathy and benevolence, for instance, may not always be that which we might wish.

It is typical of Smith's philosophy, and indeed, of the basis of all theoretical history, that the constant principles seen as motivating man's actions are believed to continue into a society where man's nature is more

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1. MS, p. 236.
2. Ibid.,

fully expressed, and to provide the basis of future change from this. As an integral part of this belief in the constancy of basic principle, there is the recognition that the same denial of the rights of others that we have seen to exist in earlier societies will be continued, and for much the same reasons. Even if the commercial system, the growth of democracy, the re-distribution of property, has meant an increase in the more humane sentiments, this is merely an expression of situation. More 'generous' sentiments are not the result of conscious or self-denying action but of processes which have developed unconsciously and as such have become a part of justice, of what society makes known through sympathy. They are not to be seen as benevolence or charity, upon which we cannot depend, but are formed into laws which we must obey.

Such sentiments, furthermore, do not end our original and most basic passions; the process of self-interest continues to operate though it is restrained by the system of justice that is appropriate to the commercial system. And, because Smith in particular accepts that this interest will often be unjust and that, at the same time we cannot control all expressions of injustice and discrimination, he emphasises in true philosophical fashion that we ought to become aware of the real interest of man which will both leave us free to express our natural desires, and benefit all of society because of the natural course of things. Such a philosophy, it would seem, is not by any means obvious even in the more enlightened society; and prudence is often overruled by the desire for immediate gain. An awareness of our real interest, then, will tend to support

existing justice or lead eventually to more philosophical forms of this.

In Wealth of Nations[1] Smith studies in some detail the various systems of thought and attitudes of men which tend to upset the natural course of things and which are thereby an affront to the philosophical interpretation. Systems which tend to advance the few will necessarily deprive the many, he thought, and although he was tolerant of the Physiocratic theory in some respects[2], he nonetheless was obliged to point out how it and all others like it failed to take into account all parts of the society, and concentrated only on some. Such attitudes, which were seen as more appropriate to earlier, less philosophical ages, did not form a whole that expressed the entirety of man's development. The Physiocratic denial of the benefits of the merchant and manufacturing classes, for instance, ignores the relationship of these to other sections of the community, and the necessary connection between the country and the towns[3]. Society must function through the self-interest of all segments so that no group is dependent on another, and revenue will increase naturally in proportion to the labour of all:

> 'It can never be the interest of the proprietors and cultivators to restrain or to discourage in any respect the industry of merchants, artificers and manufacturers. The greater the

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1. See especially Book IV, II, pp. 3-208.
2. Ibid., p. 189.
3. Although Smith does not explicitly say so, it may be that he is here condemning the physiocratic theory because it appears somewhat primitivistic, too much concerned with the emotional and ideological connotations of 'land' - thrift, hard work, etc.

> 'liberty which this unproductive class enjoys, the greater will be the competition in all the different trades which compose it, and the cheaper will the other two classes be supplied, both with foreign goods, and with the manufactured produce of their own country.' 1

The same interest not to oppress or interfere is also applicable to the merchants themselves, and that which they themselves seek should also be granted by them to others: a moral which is clearly denied by the theories of those such as the mercantilists and all others which emphasise excessive regulations of trade. In Smith's view, the basic nature of commerce or trade is that it should benefit both parties, not that one shall demand to benefit excessively to the disadvantage of the other. If this should be the case, then the whole will suffer. All philosophies which encourage interference, restriction, and force must deny the natural course of things[2]. To blockade in order to help a home industry, to buy expensive when buying cheap was possible, invades the proper correlation between industry and capital; to produce for ourselves what we could buy more cheaply elsewhere is a denial of the development of the division of labour[3], and indicates a sort of mind which is not appropriate to the needs of commercial trading[4].

Further, though we may concede that men naturally, and from benevolence, are opposed to the economic development of a neighbouring state[5], we ought to at least

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1. WN, II, pp. 189-190.
2. Ibid., I, pp. 515-516; II, p. 190.
3. Ibid., I, p. 480.
4. Ibid., pp. 518-519.
5. Ibid., p. 519.

remember that commerce 'ought naturally to be, among nations as among individuals, a bond of union and friendship'. Thus, if we cannot hope to change the operation of the human mind we should avoid as much as possible any detrimental consequences of our natural feelings[1]. The same disadvantageous results will come from all such limitations upon the natural flow of goods and services, from bounties, treaties, and so on, and while it may appear that such matters will affect only the few, it is in fact to be seen that in the long run the entire state is injured. Whether a foreign nation is given an advantage in order to encourage its own sales[2], or whether a nation's merchants are permitted to interfere with the rightful and appropriate flow, it is always the entire society which is affected, especially in the right of men to 'exchange the produce of their labour for what they please'[3]. Not only, therefore, is the economic balance upset, but other factors of life also; to disturb the natural pattern is to disturb the natural operation of rights or freedoms. Man's liberty can be invaded as efficiently by a denial of the laissez-faire operation as if he had been wrongfully imprisoned.

In all disturbances of the natural order, then, there will be a denial of personal rights and also a denial of the true interests of those who perpetrate such invasions. Monopoly will slow down the growth rate, and while as a form of acquired right it may be defensible,

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1. WN, I, p. 519.
2. Ibid., II, p. 53; see also ibid., pp. 8, 10, 11, 159.
3. Lectures, p. 205.

it ought always to give way to the general good - but rarely does. If we have a right to a proper price based on labour, a monopoly will always destroy this: 'The riches of a country consist in the plenty and cheapness of provisions, but their effect is to make every thing dear.'[1] Such restrictions, moreover, affect especially those who can least afford to be limited in their purchasing powers; as it is also the working man who is most affected by the restrictions of institutions such as apprenticeships[2], or by such factors as the restriction of the free circulation of labour. The property which all men have in the capacity to work is the first form of property and one that ought to be inviolable.

Smith does not believe, however, that simply stating these facts will be sufficient in itself to bring about change. In the first place, of course, he believes that mankind has often progressed in spite of such institutions and regulations, and in the second he feels that we should not appeal to the generosity of those in power but rather to their self-interest. This is a principle integral to the development of the independent society: 'nobody but a beggar chuses to depend chiefly upon the benevolence of his fellow citizens.'[3] Moreover, it is to be seen that interest and the inculcation of rights can be successfully combined; if, for instance, it is true that any commercial system depends on the labour of its working classes, then it is obviously in the interest of this society to maintain

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1. Lectures, p. 130.
2. WN, I, p. 137.
3. Ibid., p. 18.

the welfare of such classes. A family that is properly cared for through its breadwinner receiving an adequate wage and other securities, not only ascertains the appropriate return for labour but also increases both the capital and the population of the state[1]. The needs of men are simple but they ought always to be certain; when they are a situation is produced which is clearly advantageous to the whole: 'what improves the circumstances of the greater part can never be regarded as an inconveniency to the whole.'[2]

> 'No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable. It is but equity, besides, that they who feed, cloath, and lodge the whole body of the people, should have such a share of the produce of their own labour as to be themselves tolerably well-fed, cloathed and lodged.'[3]

Through a combination of interest and action, the heterogeneous and the deliberate, those benefits which ought to be developed by the commercial society, and which ought to be extended to all in this society, are more likely to become a solid part of the principles of the state. While accepting the constancy and uniformity of man's faults and imperfections, then, the theoretical history also believes that other expressions of man's nature will eventually lead to a more profitable and natural system, even if never a perfect one; and it believes also that while we should let the natural course of things act as it will - 'if a nation could not prosper without the enjoyment of a perfect liberty and perfect justice, there is

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1. WN, I, p. 89; see also ibid., p. 88, and II, p. 78.
2. Ibid., I, p. 88.
3. Ibid.; see also Origin, pp. 317-321.

not in the world a nation which could ever have prospered'[1] - it also believes that interest itself becomes more philosophical and that, in the modern state there are, or ought to be, institutions which enforce this philosophical spirit. This is a view which is most fully developed in the theoretical consideration of the relationship between the constant principles of man's nature and the operation of government.

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1. WN, II, pp. 194-195; see further on this matter, Warren J. Samuels, 'The Classical Theory of Economic Policy: Non-Legal Social Control', SEJ, XXXI (1964) pp. 1-20, 87-100; and George J. Stigler, 'Smith's Travels on the Ship of State', Hist. Pol. Econ., 3 (1971) pp. 265-277.

CHAPTER IV

THEORETICAL HISTORY III

THE MAINTENANCE OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

The opinion of the theoretical writers concerning the role of government in life is necessarily dependent upon their general philosophy concerning the manner in which man achieves that which is most beneficial to him. As we have seen above, the Scottish interpretation is always limited by the philosophical basis that man is governed by constant laws; and because of this philosophy the emphasis in the study of any part of the human experience is always on that which is natural, which is achieved within the framework of man's situation and through his needs. Inherent in this belief, if not always expressed consciously, is a criticism of all theories which advocate the active and consistent interference by government in man's life, particularly of those ideas which seek to establish 'rights' and feelings which are not a natural expression of men at a particular stage, and seek also the precise observation of these as if men were amenable to continual and rational intervention. For the theoretical writers, the free operation of interest, the freedom of man to act in unphilosophical ways, to search constantly for place and the respect of his fellows[1], is the only principle of life, the only 'natural course of things', the only way in which balance, if it is to exist and be maintained, will come into being.

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1. MS, pp. 263-264.

Furthermore, because of the constancy of the laws natural to human society, this general principle is true both of the domestic and the international balance of power. If the philosophical exists here it is as a result of the gradual development of men[1]; and even the more philosophical society is maintained by those principles natural to man. If in the commercial society, for instance, we see that man is more moderate and humane, he is so because such principles are made a part of the laws of justice which control his actions; and moderation and humanity are continued through interest as they have developed through the heterogeneity of ends and the capacity of man to progress.

In the theoretical view, then, the role of government and the relationship between man and government must be considered in terms of these principles. As has been pointed out above, the factor which most affects the behaviour of men is the desire which they have to gain the approval of their fellows[2]. Our desire to gain place, allied to the operation of benevolence which leads us to feel respect for those above us and to maintain our own privileges, is the basis of the attitude of men towards governmental actions and towards political change in general. These feelings are reflected in the two forms of morality which exist in the civil society, each of which is necessary for the maintenance of stability - even though the morality of the nobility may appear useless[3], the

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1. See below, p. 201.
2. See above, Chapter II.
3. MS, pp. 73-74, 79-80.

parts are always inextricably a whole. As the ordinary man acts in a 'prudent', more traditionally 'virtuous' fashion in order to gain seemingly unphilosophical ends which are nonetheless useful, the more apparently self-interested actions of the aristocracy are also of value to the society. The principle of sympathy for, identification with, those who are above us in rank leads us both to feel much for our superiors[1], and to have the greatest reluctance to act against them[2]; and it is not hope for personal benefit, nor a sense of the utility arising from such a situation that is the basis of our feeling. The great may despise us, in accordance with their own sense of superiority, yet it is not this attitude which makes the greatest impression on us: we continue to respond favourably to them as before. It requires a great amount of invasion, oppression and complete indifference to the 'rights' of the ordinary man by those above him before any response is made, and even this response may be painful to the citizen because of the fall from greatness which it involves[3]:

> 'Even when the order of society seems to require that we should oppose them, we can hardly bring ourselves to do it. That kings are the servants of the people, to be obeyed, resisted, deposed, or punished, as the public conveniency may require, is the doctrine of reason and philosophy; but it is not the doctrine of nature ... The strongest motives, the most furious passions, fear, hatred, and resentment, are scarce sufficient to balance this natural disposition to respect them: and their conduct must, either justly or unjustly, have excited the highest degree of all those passions, before the bulk of the people can be brought to

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1. MS, pp. 73-76, 79-80.
2. Ibid., pp. 74-75.
3. Ibid., p. 79.

> oppose them with violence, or to desire to see them either punished or deposed.' 1

Such sentiments, however unphilosophical they may be, are in fact the basis of the stability of government since they mean that change is likely to be prompted only when of the greatest necessity. Ordinarily, the division of ranks within society, the benevolence which makes each member of a particular group seek to support the interest of his own, as well as the respect which we have for those above us, are the most stabilising factors in the civil society. The existence of individual or group interest may be thought of as a challenge to the welfare of the whole, but this is so only if we think in 'rational' terms; in reality, this 'unjust' feeling of partiality is not only natural to men in this stage of development but it has a much more philosophical end than we might have thought:

> 'This partiality ... checks the spirit of innovation. It tends to preserve whatever is the established balance among the different orders and societies into which the state is divided; and while it sometimes appears to obstruct some alterations of government which may be fashionable and popular at the time, it contributes in reality to the stability and permanency of the whole system.' 2

For Smith, the stability of the state is of major importance and this belief affects the whole of his political philosophy. Benevolence, he feels, is ordinarily sufficient for us both to love our country and to wish for its benefit[3], and both of these feelings can ordinarily

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1. MS, p. 74.
2. Ibid., p. 339.
3. Ibid.

be accomodated by the usual manner in which we express our interest. But on those very rare occasions when it may seem necessary to change the government we must be more careful as to the real nature of our interests, and ascertain whether, under the guise of a truly enlightened public spirit or desire for the welfare of others[1], men are not attempting to put forward their own very limited pleas for reformation. Smith, it is to be noticed, does not deny the necessity for change, even of planned and conscious change; it is rather that he denies the supposition that claims of others to be working wholly on the behalf of men in general[2] can be taken wholly at face value. Ordinarily, then, we may not need to evaluate our political system consciously and rationally; but it is to be expected that we take advantage of the natural and unplanned philosophical or rational attitudes that have become a part of our mores in order to benefit ourselves:

> 'in such cases ... it often requires, perhaps, the highest effort of political wisdom to determine when a real patriot ought to support and endeavour to re-establish the authority of the old system, and when he ought to give way to the more daring, but often dangerous, spirit of innovation.' 3

This particular expression of benevolence - love of country and the desire to be a good citizen - clearly demands some action and some careful consideration of issues; but this is not to say that the introduction of a more

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1. MS, pp. 265-266.
2. Ibid., p. 341; 'a certain spirit of system is apt to mix itself with that public spirit which is founded upon the love of humanity'. See also ibid., p. 266 for Smith's opinion on the meaning of public spirit.
3. Ibid., p. 340.

conscious or rational element means that this form of benevolence must be distinguished from other, earlier expressions of this quality. Such action and consideration is still based on interest, on an awareness created by the philosophical society of our real benefits and of the falseness of those doctrines which claim to be able to change all 'wrongs' at one time[1]. If we do accept the need for change, we do so from a more philosophical interest.

This emphasis of the theoretical writers on the general, on the natural, and on the relationship of the parts to the whole is an integral part of their attitude towards government; and because of this they necessarily go far beyond the theories of earlier schools which limit the types of change which the society can absorb. The theoretical historians' study of the development of man has led them to believe that it is through the extension of property to all that greater developments of human nature have come about, and thus that commerce itself cannot be

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1. MS, p. 341. See also Lectures, p. 31. The theoretical position here was summarised by Stewart in his study of the changing patterns of European thought: 'In enlightened ages ... there cannot be a doubt, that political wisdom comes in for its share in the administration of human affairs; and there is reasonable ground for hoping, that its influence will continue to increase, in proportion as the principles of legislation are more generally studied and understood. To suppose the contrary, would reduce us to be mere spectators of the progress and decline of society, and put an end to every species of patriotic exertion.' (Works, I, pp. 191-192. See also ibid., pp. 491-492, and his Lectures on Political Economy, New York, 1968, hereafter cited Lectures , I, p. 48).

seen as necessarily detrimental to man[1]. Furthermore, they also show that in the commercial society the operations of the human mind remain similar, sothat if any question of corruption occurs, it must be both recognised and dealt with in a manner appropriate to the age. Because of this we may see that while the theoretical history has certainly learnt much from the commonwealth works, it also goes beyond these to find commerce beneficial and to find also that the correction of the abuses of the commercial system can be achieved with a limited amount of action[2]. The nature of man tends to develop solutions along with changes, whether these be automatic or demand a more conscious expression of the philosophical spirit.

In his consideration of the operation of the modern commercial society Smith concentrated particularly on the limitations of political power and on the invasions of rights which resulted from the discrepancy between apparent and real interest. For the theoretical writers, the evolution of the modern system and the growth of science and philosophy, particularly in the more modern ages[3], necessarily affected the concepts of law and of 'justice' which governed men, these changes being reflected through

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1. See, for instance, Stewart, Lectures, I, p. 35: 'it was the general diffusion of wealth among the lower orders of men which first gave birth to the spirit of independence in Modern Europe, and which has produced under some of its governments ... a more equal diffusion of freedom and of happiness than took place under the most celebrated constitutions of antiquity'. See also Hume, 'Of Commerce', Essays, pp. 259-274.
2. For a brief examination of the commonwealth philosophy, see below, Appendix B.
3. Millar, Hist. View, III, pp. 7, 144-145, 213; IV, pp. 281-282, 308-310.

the sympathetic process. The actual extent of the philosophical nature of society, therefore, is not in itself a denial either of the heterogeneous process (since there is always an awareness of the unintended and natural factors which produced such changes) or of the limitations of benevolence or generosity in human society. The philosophical spirit that does exist has both grown gradually and become a normal part of the human response to situations: we are not motivated consciously by the more rational, this being simply a part of our virtu[1] or of the means by which we maintain the political benefit:

> 'Philosophy has been constantly advancing in all the departments of science; has been employed in reducing all the works of art, all the appearances of nature, to their principles; and has not neglected to push her researches into political as well as other branches of speculation. The mysteries of government have been more and more unveiled and the circumstances which contribute to the perfection of the social order have been laid open.' 2

This growth of man is the result of the heterogeneous process, the capacity of man to progress, of the force of the quality of self-interest, which are all expressed in economic terms. The freedom of man in his possession of property has enabled him to expand his mind sufficiently in order to be aware of the dangers of society that he was once completely vulnerable to, at the same time as it has, generally speaking, provided the means by which he and his representatives can maintain their freedom. The spread of wealth and related factors such as the division of labour leads Millar to believe that 'we cannot entertain a doubt

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1. See below, pp.526-529.
2. Millar, Hist. View, IV, pp. 304-305; see also III, pp. 149-150, 231.

'of their powerful efficacy to propagate corresponding sentiments, of personal independence, and to instil higher notions of general liberty'[1], the truth of which statement he illustrated by the philosophical rejection of the Stewarts by the greater part of the Scots in both 1715 and 1745[2]. Our financial independence which is produced by our possession of property in land, labour, or goods enables us to both develop our minds towards a more philosophical appreciation of life, and to enforce the conclusions which we have reached from this natural philosophical process.

While there is some dependence left in the society, then, particularly among labourers, the greater part of the members of the commercial state is both free and enabled to act together in order to check invasions of liberties[3]. In the view of Millar particularly the traditional basis of political power, property or superior qualities, is supported by man's natural respect for wealth[4] and known as authority. This authority is an expression of an automatic process, of the natural operation of the human mind, and, free from any other limitations imposed by the rights of men, is the foundation of the Tory political theory. Utility, on the other hand, or the scien-

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1. Hist. View, IV, pp. 124-125.
2. Ibid., III, p. 7.
3. Ibid., pp. 114-115, 116-127; see also IV, pp. 128, 137: 'The voice of the mercantile interest never fails to command the attention of government, and when firm and unanimous, is even able to controul and direct the deliberations of the national councils.'
4. Ibid., p. 289.

tific examination of the actual basis of much political ideology (and thus, to some degree, the basis of the Whig philosophy) is a natural expression of the more philosophical society, and reflects our capacity to judge independently of the pressures of others. It is more likely, therefore, that utility is the predominating influence in the modern commercial government: 'the diffusion of knowledge tends more and more to encourage and bring forward the principle of utility in all political discussions.'[1]

This is not indeed to say that the philosophical society has become totally practical and is always conscious of the manner in which it acts; 'authority', Millar believes, like Smith, always has a place[2]. It is rather that authority remains the factor that limits 'the rash and visionary projects' that influence men in the modern as well as in older societies[3], while utility gradually becomes a part of the attitudes of the whole, and thus of the nature of government. The combination of the two is generally of considerable benefit to all, so long as neither element gains the public imagination, so long, in short, as we neither consistently attack every apparent wrong, nor submit ourselves to tyranny and oppression:

> 'In reality, men, when they come into society, are bound to preserve the natural rights of one another; and, consequently, to establish a government conducive to that end. Good government is necessary to prevent robbery, murder, and oppression; and if a man be supposed to have promised, that he would support or obey a government of an opposite tendency, it would be his

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1. Hist. View, IV, p. 309.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

'duty to break such an illegal compact, and to reform such an unjust constitution.' 1

The more philosophical society necessarily differs in several respects from earlier societies and these differences are believed by the theoretical writers to be expressed in all aspects of government. The contents of our moral sentiments naturally change with our situation, and it is a vital part of the philosophical basis of theoretical history that we become aware of this. It is also necessary, particularly as regards the question of conscious behaviour,that we continually relate the natural, heterogeneous development of the philosophical elements in society to the attitudes which the theoretical historians hold concerning duties and responsibilities within the state; and not to think that actions which they see as resulting from an entirely unthinking and spontaneous division of power are an indication of their belief in conscious and genuinely dis-interested action for the benefit of the whole. While the contents of the moral sentiments, of what we think and feel about our fellows may have changed, the means by which we interact, gain the respect of others, and promote our own interest, remain constant. In this at least the theoretical philosophy is able to indicate that all our 'utilitarian' actions are simply a continuation of our usual responses and do not demand a cessation of interest or an increase in benevolence. Virtu, then, or the qualities which maintain society, is in constant evolution, and is always existing; it does not necessarily

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1. Hist. View, IV, p. 301; this attitude is also to be seen in Hume's essays, 'Of the Original Contract' and 'Of Passive Obedience'.

disappear with the change in the balance of property[1].

To some degree Smith's interpretation of the modern society is an answer to the problems of some commonwealth writers concerning corruption and invasion of rights, in that the generally philosophical situation which he sees as existing means that unintended events have overcome these very drawbacks of which earlier writers spoke. He has also indicated that if men cannot ordinarily deal with the limitations of their rights, they ought either to accept this, or to see that their failure is an expression of a natural inability to overcome certain factors:

> 'In the greatest public as well as private disasters, a wise man ought to consider that he himself, his friends and countrymen, have only been ordered upon the forlorn station of the universe; that had it not been necessary for the good of the whole, they would not have been so ordered; and that it is their duty, not only with humble resignation to submit to this allotment, but to endeavour to embrace it with alacrity and joy.' 2

Yet he does also consider that in the modern society at least there are, or ought to be, some legal limitations of detrimental effects, and that any existing limitations have evolved through the political division of power and ought to be a part of the executive authority. The restoring of the natural course of things, therefore, through the development of commerce, does not preclude the existence of natural checks on continuing interested actions of men. Indeed, it is an integral part of the 'system of natural liberty'[3] that the executive possess certain duties

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1. See below, Appendix B.
2. MS, p. 347. See also ibid., p. 502.
3. WN, II, p. 208.

which are to be carried out on a regular basis and not through erratic benevolence.

While Smith to some degree suggests a state in which the king was limited by the philosophical nature of society and obliged from the same factor to act for the public benefit[1], thereby apparently dismissing the problems of the commonwealth writers, he does also show some awareness of the problem of corruption. The difference, however, between commonwealth and theoretical writing and ideas is to be seen especially in the manner in which virtu[2] is to be restored, and the relationship between this virtu and the nature of the society itself. For Smith, virtu is the appropriate expression of the moral sentiments, and it is vital that this be restored if it has been upset or overbalanced by the property situation or by man's lack of control:

> 'In some cases the state of the society necessarily places the greater part of individuals in such situations as naturally form in them, without any attention of government, almost all the abilities and virtues which that state requires, or perhaps can admit of. In other cases the state of the society does not place the greater part of individuals in such situations, and some attention of government is necessary in order to prevent the almost entire corruption and degeneracy of the great body of the people.' 3

While it may be that the heterogeneous process will

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1. WN, II, p. 208; that the king's actions were to be seen as duty is evident from the fact that he was to be paid: ibid., p. 338.
2. Smith does not use this term as such, but it is clear that the proper operations of the moral sentiments are an expression of what earlier writers called virtu.
3. WN, II, p. 302.

eventually solve these problems, perhaps if only through the inevitable decline of the state[1], it is apparent that Smith believes we must also act as our situation or our more philosophical awareness both permits and directs us to. Smith's basic position on this issue of the adverse effects of the commercial society, and that of Millar also[2], is that man is affected in the active operation of his mind by the debilitating effects of the division of labour, the same factor that has contributed also to the emergence of his real freedoms:

> 'In the progress of the division of labour, the employment of the far greater part of those who live by labour, that is, of the great body of the people, comes to be confined to a few very simple operations; frequently to one or two. But the understandings of the greater part of men are necessarily formed by their ordinary employments. The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations, of which the effects too are, perhaps, always the same, or very nearly the same, has no occasion to exert his understanding, or to exercise his invention in finding out expedients for removing difficulties which never occur. He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion, and generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become. The torpor of his mind renders him, not only incapable of relishing or bearing a part in any rational conversation, but of conceiving any generous, noble, or tender sentiment, and consequently of forming any just judgment concerning many even of the ordinary duties of private life. Of the great and extensive interests of his country he is altogether incapable of judging; and unless very particular pains have been taken to render him otherwise, he is equally incapable of defending his country in war. The uniformity of his stationary life naturally corrupts the courage of his mind, and makes him regard with abhorrence the irregular, uncertain,

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1. Lectures, p. 32
2. See also Ferguson, Essay, pp. 214-218; and E. G. West, 'The Political Economy of Alienation: Karl Marx and Adam Smith', OEP, n.s. 21 (1969) pp. 1-23.

> 'and adventurous life of a soldier. It corrupts even the activity of his body, and renders him incapable of exerting his strength with vigour and perseverance ...' 1

While Millar obviously shares Smith's view on the basic effects of the alienation of the moral sentiments, it is apparent that Smith goes much beyond Millar in his relating the effects of this division of labour on the mind and body to the usual principles which affect the manner in which man acts and is a member of a society. He emphasises again that man acts through a desire to gain the respect of his fellows, that he achieves his knowledge of the world through the sympathetic process when he points out how we are limited in our understanding and judgment by the narrowing of our horizons: 'happiness and misery, which reside altogether in the mind, must necessarily depend more upon the healthful or unhealthful, the mutilated or entire state of the mind, than upon that of the body.'[2]

In the first place, the 'mental mutilation, deformity, and wretchedness' which besets us must necessarily limit our justified self-interest, our major concern to look out for ourselves without which the whole cannot prosper; and without which, indeed, we cannot develop any sense of, or interaction with, others. If we lack the normal responses of revenging or defending ourselves[3], for instance, we are denying the qualities which are a vital part of the social process. Certainly we gain none of that sympathy on which we ordinarily depend. This

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1. WN, II, pp. 302-303; see also Hist. View, IV, pp. 145-146, 151-152, 159-160, 186-188.
2. WN, II, p. 308.
3. Ibid.; see also pp. 46-47 above.

ennervation or corruption of our sentiments, therefore, must clearly be detrimental to the society as a whole, quite apart from the effect which it has on the individual. Through sympathy, through ascertaining the social norms, we not only gain approval or disapproval and express this to others, but we also gain knowledge of the ordinary levels of behaviour which affect the position and spirit of the state. Here especially does the true meaning of Smith's concern with the martial spirit become obvious[1], since if we are deprived of approbation and disapproval we are also deprived of the expression of benevolence. We can neither feel much for others, nor can we feel the particular expression of benevolence which naturally leads us to both love our country and wish to defend it[2]. If we do not naturally possess such feelings, then, the interest of the society demands that they be created by other means[3].

The existence of a martial spirit, of a desire to act for the welfare of the state both against foreigners and, if necessary, against a standing army, is the means by which Smith believes the problems of the modern army are to be met. And, in relation to the commonwealth problems of the 'militia', the 'standing army' and so on, Smith's consideration of the necessary relation between situation and change is of particular importance to our understanding of the manner in which he overcame the problems posed by the commonwealth philosophy. He states specifically

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1. WN, II, p. 307.
2. MS, pp. 334-336.
3. See J. M. A. Gee, 'Adam Smith's Social Welfare Function', SJPE, 15 (1968) pp. 283-299, and Stigler, op. cit.

that possession of the martial spirit is vital to the commercial society - 'the security of every society must always depend, more or less, upon the martial spirit of the great body of the people' - and at the same time he shows in considerable detail the former relationships between social level and military capacity[1] which existed in other societies and were extended, without much effort (because of the political/economic situation) to the greater part of the inhabitants[2]. The conclusions which he draws from this study are both that 'the virtue of courage appears, in all the nations of modern Europe, to have declined in proportion to their advancement in commerce and manufactures'[3], and that it would be against the natural rhythm of the commercial society to re-introduce the militia in which all citizens were soldiers rather than craftsmen. In this indeed both Smith and Millar challenge the commonwealth belief in the concept of the militia as being necessary at all times - although such a theory itself is a product of an age in which commerce was not dominant. In the theoretical viewpoint the force most suited to the modern society is that of the standing army - a term which for them has no automatic meaning of repression - and the militia is seen as 'adverse to the spirit of the times'[4]. The modern system of warfare demands obedience to superiors and familiarity with one's equipment[5], both factors which

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1. WN, II, pp. 303-304.
2. Ibid., pp. 307-308.
3. Hist. View, IV, p. 188.
4. Ibid.
5. WN, II, p. 222; obedience, presumably, may be reinforced by benevolence or our respect for those above us.

cannot easily be provided by the militia. It also demands a professional spirit and competency, and this can be maintained only by the standing or professional army even when it is rarely actively employed in battle[1].

Smith also argues against the commonwealth insistence on the importance of the militia when he suggests that a standing army will be as beneficial to the interests of the state as the older form would, particularly in its abilities to meet the pressures which develop in opulent nations[2]. When there exists a military force which is led by the king and served by the nobility and gentry as officers there is no corruption[3]. The interests of the principal members of the society are clearly to maintain that society. This presumably is so because a balanced state does exist, and to this extent there is no real conflict between Smith's idea and that of the commonwealth writers; it is rather that the latter were concerned to show that this balance did not exist, and that a nobility without land, and a court in search of power would necessarily act against the interests of the other property-holding members of society.

While Smith concedes the validity of such concerns 'wherever the interest of the general and that of the principal officers are not necessarily connected with the support of the constitution of the state'[4], he is more interested to show that there are other dangers and that in

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1. WN, II, p. 228.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 229.
4. Ibid.

these situations society benefits by having a strong and efficient army. This can be used to support the established powers against 'every popular discontent', to be, in other words, 'favourable to liberty'[1]. The responsible must be protected from the irrational elements. In this respect the ordinary soldier appears to play only that role which is allotted to him, fighting for the propertied against those who have no such material goods; he is not, as in the commonwealth, fighting for his own and thereby the public benefit, he is fighting as a soldier and not as a citizen. This is entirely appropriate to an age in which men are primarily employed in professions other than that of citizen, a situation which reflects circumstances that the commonwealth theories had not thought possible - that the greater part of the population could pursue its own interests and leave its defence to a professional army.

By such arguments Smith may indeed avoid some of the problems which the commonwealth writers faced[2], but he nonetheless does establish the modern military system on necessity and thereby does away with the less philosophical belief that the institutions of a society should remain fixed and unchanging. At the same time, however, his own feelings concerning the necessary revival of the martial spirit for those who are presumably no part of the

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1. WN, II, p. 229.
2. For instance, he does believe that the standing army can successfully incorporate many of the features of the militia and implies that balance and (perhaps) proper moral sentiments of the people will prevent corruption and misuse of this force. See below, pp. 529-530.

professional army demand a close examination. The lack of operation of the moral sentiments in society, he believes, cannot be changed completely by the actions or thought of those who are free since the power of individuals is necessarily limited[1]. The spirit itself ought to be restored and men enabled to regain their social feelings; and to some degree he believes that education itself, by exercising the mind, is conducive to the restoration of the sense of self, and thereby to the more normal operation of the senses and the moral processes, a restoration which is of benefit to the state:

> 'The more they are instructed, the less liable they are to the delusions of enthusiasm and superstition, which, among ignorant nations, frequently occasion the most dreadful disorders. An instructed and intelligent people besides, are always more decent and orderly than an ignorant and stupid one. They feel themselves, each individually, more respectable, and more likely to obtain the respect of their lawful superiors, and they are therefore more disposed to respect those superiors.' 2

This process of re-education and of restoring the qualities natural to man is also strengthened, in Smith's belief, by the possession of a martial spirit. If a man lacks this, if he is cowardly, then his mind is prevented from expressing those natural sentiments which are vital to him. The renewal of the spirit, therefore, serves the same end as education, in making the ordinary working man a part of society. Smith also believes that it is necessary for men to be able to express their natural patriotism and their benevolence towards their country; for, though this feeling is ordinarily evident in our attitude towards other states and those with whom we may trade[3], there are occas-

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1. WN, II, p. 304. However, see below, pp. 150-152.
2. Ibid., p. 309; see also MS, pp. 340-341.
3. MS, pp. 335-336.

ions when it may need to be expressed more concretely. If so, then the martial spirit is not extraneous in the state which has a professional army. It may be of use both in supporting this body, and in providing some defence against it if it should be used against the national interests[1]. In such situations an active spirit is an expression of interest and benevolence. In this argument there is certainly no lack of correlation between situation and the sentiments which are natural to man, and in this respect Smith's ideas are consonant with his general philosophy. The only unanswered question is that concerning the means by which this martial spirit is to be restored, and Smith is not explicit on this, perhaps implying that education will also fulfil this purpose.

While we may see in the work of Millar a greater interest in the specifically commonwealth problems of corruption - the standing army, the lack of ministerial responsibility, and so on - it is also evident that his opinion of the operation of government in the modern state goes beyond this. 'We are not ... to dream of perfection in any human workmanship', he believes[2], and it is evident that he feels it to be a part of the natural course of things not only that there be change but that imperfection is a part of man and his society[3]. Because of this Millar feels that we can have neither an immortal commonwealth nor a balance of power that will prevent such changes.

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1. WN, II, p. 307.
2. Hist. View, IV, p. 78.
3. Ibid., pp. 94-95.

Corruption, in some sense, will always be with us and will not necessarily be eradicated by the constitution, by a separation of powers, or by balance through conflict. We must accept the present and the future, and accept also that man himself will adapt to, and overcome, many of the modern forms of imperfection and injustice.

It is here particularly that the belief of both Smith and Millar in the increasingly philosophical nature of society is of importance as a part of their capacity to accept what social change brings, and here also that the importance of their theories concerning education and the duties of executive power is to be found. As situation affects the nature of earlier constitutions, so also will it affect the means by which current problems are to be dealt with; and the influence of interest, the actions for the king by the ministers within the houses of parliament, and the extension of influence to a great part of the political body is not necessarily disastrous to 'freedom' but can be balanced gradually and naturally. While we may be affected by interest, this, in Millar's opinion does not limit our capacity to act. Our situation in the commercial society is not precisely the same as it was in the earlier systems, for there is both a greater amount of political power and of independence among the commercial class and among others in the society. While dependence is not eradicated by the extension of property to a greater number, therefore, it is of a much milder kind, not one in which man loses his whold sense of being, nor one in which

he is wholly at the mercy of another[1]: 'the circumstances of a country, highly advanced in commerce and manufactures, are such as, naturally, and without any interposition of government, have a tendency to moderate those great differences of fortune, which, in a rude age, are usually the source of tyranny and oppression.'[2]

Furthermore, Millar believes, we are so firmly entrenched in our concerns and in the expression of our interest that we are not likely to surrender the benefit of this to the state if the oppression of government becomes obvious to us; this is so because the commercial society is a close one and has the capacity to unite when necessary: 'As the inhabitants multiply from the facility of procuring subsistence, they are collected in large bodies for the convenient exercise of their employments.'[3] As far as the merchant class is concerned, then, it has not, like the labouring population, lost its capacity to defend itself and its interest; it is rather that this capacity is rarely expressed because there are few reasons for calling it into play:

> 'If the oppression of government should be carried so far as to aim at the destruction of property, the mercantile people would, probably, be the first to burst the bands of fear, and be actuated by a desperate valour in defence of those objects to which they are so immoderately attached. The effect of great commercial opulence, therefore, is to produce caution and long-suffering under the hand of power, but to ensure ultimately a vigorous opposition to such acts of tyranny as are manifestly subversive of

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1. Hist. View, IV, pp. 128-129.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., pp. 134-135;

> 'the fundamental rights of mankind. This, in reality, seems to point at the due medium of that submission which men owe to their political governors: for nothing is more inconsistent with the happiness of society, than the frequent recurrence of the people to resistance upon slight and trivial grievances; and when there is a real necessity to resist the usurpation of the sovereign, he commonly pulls off the mask in sufficient time to give warning to his subjects, that they may be fully justified for uniting in defence of their privileges.' 1

While Millar may not be particularly involved with questions of the corruption of the moral sentiments, then, he does reveal in this passage especially how much the constant principle of interest will maintain that which has been achieved, and how much the commercial society necessarily produces defences against corruption that are appropriate to itself. Furthermore, he is sufficiently a disciple of Smith to also support the theory of the need for educating those groups whose capacities have been so severely limited by the division of labour as to impede their ability to act as full members of their society - hence his combination of both interest and the enlightened or philosophical to explain the maintenance of that which has been achieved[2].

This emphasis on interest in the theoretical work, particularly on real as opposed to apparent interest, is not only an argument which goes much beyond the commonwealth theories, but is also one which reinforces the theoretical historians' belief that all the expressions of human society are appropriate to the level of economic

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1. Hist. View, IV, pp. 200-201.
2. Ibid., pp. 158-160, 309.

security. While it is true that there are many problems in the commercial society, then, it is true also that men have the capacity to overcome many of these and to help maintain a social structure which is seen to have a satisfying role for a greater number. The whole of society is brought within one body in order to benefit equally from the advances which have been made. Those who have been able to express their interest and their moral sentiments without much hindrance use their interest to benefit themselves, and this also benefits others. The spread of philosophical opinions or actions resulting from this freedom will, or ought to, lead to the institutionalisation of those duties by which the more repressed are enabled to develop the moral sentiments necessary for the fuller expression of human nature.

It is natural, then, for men to correct abuses, to attempt to remedy defects in the moral sentiments. Nevertheless, it is also natural that the present society will give way to another, and that we neither can nor should attempt to change this process: 'A fated dissolution ... awaits every state and constitution whatever.'[1] Such change is inevitable because of the unintended effects of our actions, because of man's capacity for change. The principles which have been the basis of human action in past societies will also be the cause of future evolution and progress; and all the parts of human experience are thereby united into a whole. This inevitability men must

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1. Smith, Lectures, p. 32

accept and accomodate themselves to; to do so indeed, is to be eminently philosophical, to truly understand the laws which make the human experience of any age a part of universal human nature.

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The general theoretical principles of the heterogeneity of ends and of the capacity of men to progress qualitatively through economic change, are the basis of this whole historical philosophy and of the entire theoretical interpretation of the general and particular past of mankind. The understanding of the operation of the human mind, the expression of the two basic laws in economic and thence social terms, and the concurrent denial of the rational or planned nature of change (except when this is a natural part of society) permit the theoretical historians to stress that non-philosophical factors are the predominant causal elements in their philosophy, and that the 'scientific' observation of past and present human societies enables the historian to establish an interpretation which emphasises the impersonal and the unintended.

In particular, the peculiar force of these laws that provide the basis of the theoretical interpretation results from the fact that they tend to eliminate the isolated factors, the individualism and the greater dependence on fortune which are characteristics of the type of philosophical history written by Voltaire. The general patterns of human development which are produced by the varying economic situation of each society, the overwhelming importance of situation to the ripening of human potential, and the theoretical exphasis on the long-term and the unplanned, means that theories of 'accident',of the importance of individuals and of such factors as climate and geography play a very limited role in this historical philosophy.

Though there is some indication in certain of the theoretical works that older ideas of the role of climate continue[1], there is in general a greater concentration on the manner in which men overcome the effects of temperature extremes. The theoretical interpretation does make some concessions as to the effect of physical factors when men are likely to be vulnerable to these, but finds the influence of them to decline in proportion to the extent to which man controls life in general. Dependence on the unpredictable elements of life necessarily predominates when man does not gain his subsistence on a regular basis; as soon as he progresses beyond such an elementary stage, and can establish greater personal security and self-sufficiency, the extent of his subordination to the physical world declines.

It is true, indeed, that particular types of climate will limit men through encouraging disease, through causing vegetation which is difficult to clear, thus preventing emergence of agriculture[2]; and the major importance of climate in the earliest form of human society lies in the fact that this element itself often determines the rate of human growth. Climatic factors, then, are really most important in the first ages of man: 'The talents of civilized

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1. See, for instance, Ferguson, Essay, pp. 114-115, and Robertson, The History of Scotland (title given in Historical Works edition, originally published as The History of Scotland during the Reigns of Queen Mary and of James VI ... With a Review of the Scottish History Previous to that Period, hereafter cited Scotland) Works, I, p. 109. See also America, Works, III, pp. 252, 297.
2. Ibid., p. 361.

'men are continually exerted in rendering their own condition more comfortable ... But the improvident savage is affected by every circumstance peculiar to his situation.'[1] Yet, even in the most primitive stages, we cannot see that climate is the sole causal factor[2]; thus, though it is true that a cold climate may help develop man through making it necessary for him to develop his qualities in order to survive in a harsh landscape[3], moral qualities also enter into our assessment of men in torrid zones[4]. The fact is that variations in society, especially in the more developed institutions characteristic of later stages of development, result from more sophisticated and more complicated factors; men are more profoundly affected by the institutions which have been created in the past at the same time as they achieve a greater stability because of their dependence on such elements as trade and agriculture.

If physical factors do continue to have a place in human society, this can only be a limited one, according to the theoretical writers. Climate as cause is indirect or secondary, and while it may have been the original cause of the emergence of a particular type of social structure, it is no longer the main causal factor, always being limited by 'moral' qualities - human ideas and institutions. In short, as man develops and becomes more involved with, and dependent on, moral causes, the physical basis of society is of less importance: the moral factors lead to the

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1. America, Works, III, p. 361.
2. Ibid., p. 362.
3. Ibid., p. 271.
4. Ibid., p. 362.

formation of institutions and customs which have a continuing life of their own. 'Geography', for instance, becomes 'property' in the particular theoretical sense of the term, and this concept itself involves complex social and economic relationships which preclude dependence on anything so variable as climate. Moreover, knowledge and experience in themselves, given physical situations which are not entirely inhibiting, can often achieve considerable ends, so that the members of a more advanced society will apply their inherited skills and enjoy a more productive life than those men of an earlier stage of development who live in the same area[1].

Another indication of the lessening importance of physical factors is that while the indirect and secondary influence may continue, men are no longer vulnerable to the adverse effects of this; what might once have been a major causal element gradually becomes no more than a temporary effect when the most dominating circumstances of life are the form of state and the effect of past traditions and customs. This is seen, for instance, even in the theoretical interpretation of particular events as in Robertson's history of European power struggles in the first half of the sixteenth century. While certain climatic curiosities might occur, and may have some effect

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1. See, for instance, Robertson, America, Works, III, p. 254: 'If another direction were given to the active powers of man in the New World, and his force augmented by exercise, he might acquire a degree of vigour which he does not in his present state possess. The truth of this is confirmed by experience.'

on a particular situation, they do not necessarily have the capacity to entirely reverse the history of nations: men are more liable to recover from the unexpected because they have an established background to fall back on[1].

The same restrictions which apply to the role of climate are also to be applied to that of geography. While we can see in the theoretical history, as well as in works such as Spirit of the Laws, that the older correlations between size of state and form of government continues[2], this is by no means a relationship dependent only on physical factors. First, actual size of any society depends to a considerable degree on human elements since the state itself only comes into being with men. Secondly, these physical factors have no value in themselves and must be related to the form of the particular society occupying the land: there must, in fact, be an interrelationship between the physical and the moral factors. Thus, for instance, there is a belief that a large area of land, occupied by men at a barbarous level, will generally develop into a feudal society: large tracts generally mean separate states and independent rulers, yet this is so only when the social level is such as to tolerate social interaction, personal loyalty and the particular means of subsistence necessary to maintain the feudal state[3]. While the theoretical belief in common forms of government resulting from common forms of landholding is necessarily an integral part of the theoretical philosophy, then, this emphasis on land-

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1. See Charles V, Works, VI, p. 501.
2. See, for instance, Millar, Origin, p. 292.
3. See Robertson, Scotland, Works, I, pp. 19-20.

holding goes far beyond geographic factors: it also includes the moral. Similar large areas inhabited by a savage society, for instance, which is still primarily concerned with the individual and which depends on hunting and fishing for subsistence, do not in themselves produce any form of government of the type that we associate with the feudal state. This being lacking, the two situations are necessarily separated by moral factors. In a like manner we can also see that a small number of people, who are at a civil stage of society, and who live in a relatively narrow territory, are protected because of this by a centralised form of government, itself resulting from the interaction between physical and moral factors. This combination of elements means that they do not develop feudalism, but live under another form of government altogether.[1] It is observable then, that while mountains may mean freedom, and flat countries result in despotism, this is so not because of any vague, romantic reasons, but because of the influence of the moral on the physical. And, in any event, geography itself does not necessarily form the state even in man's first efforts towards development.

It is also obvious that the national spirit, or the particular social level of any system, is much more vital than actual geographic factors in themselves, since the former is an expression of man's growth and of his capacity to act for himself. As Robertson suggests in America, the actual existence of particular geographic features such

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1. Millar, Hist. View, I, pp. 107-108.

as rivers and good ports is of considerable potential benefit to those states which possess them[1]. Yet the key word here is 'potential', for such factors in themselves mean nothing; they do not, for instance, bring about the change from overland to marine commerce which was to have such an effect on human society. The theoretical history is fundamentally concerned, as is philosophical history in general, with the history of the human mind, with that which has led man to be able to make use of these natural facilities. The geographic features are permanent in that they are always in existence; it is not these continuing factors which explain change, therefore, but the changing human process, the advance of man's capacities. This is particularly clearly revealed by Robertson in his summary of the advance in the mind of the European man especially, in America, in Charles V and to some extent in India also. The interaction of the physical and the moral may have helped ascertain particular developments by particular societies in matters such as trade etc., yet these advances in themselves were totally dependent for their actual origins on the desires of men.

As Smith and Millar in particular reveal in their study of the basis of human society, it is the operation of the human mind, the desire to improve one's lot, the irrational and yet productive (because of the heterogeneous process) elements which affect men that are the most basic causal factors in society even though these may be in some degree originally limited by physical factors. Thus, as

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1. America, Works, III, pp. 216-217.

Robertson, for instance, indicates in Charles V, conditions which are abstractly ideal for trade and commerce are of little benefit to men as such. The advance of the English in this particular field was always dependent not only on the moral factors that advanced the society to the commercial stage itself, but also on those moral factors that underlie any political system[1]. While man may continue to be affected by irrational elements, therefore, it is apparent that these will have effect only because they are moral, and the results which they do bring are of a type vastly different from the isolated, limited and obvious results of climate and land formation. The theoretical historians moved away from the obscure and constantly sought to establish the more certain and less sporadic as the basis of the variation and constancy that was human progress, a position which was summarised precisely Millar when he wrote that:

> 'in the history of the world, we see no regular marks of that secret influence which has been ascribed to the air and climate, but, on the contrary, may commonly explain the great differences in the manners and customs of mankind from other causes, the existence of which is capable of being more clearly ascertained.' 2

Because of the theoretical dependence on general levels of achievement, on the multitude of primarily moral causes which affect man, and on the necessary relationship of all actions to the social process, there is also little emphasis given by this interpretation to the role of individuals or the great man in history. This is not to deny that in

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1. Charles V, Works, V, pp. 547-548 (Note XXX). See also Millar, Hist. View, II. pp. 378-390.
2. Millar, Origin, pp. 179-180.

the early stages of life the individual concern with self is not the most distinguishing feature of man, but is rather to indicate that even in the most primitive social gathering any advance is made through what any particular group can achieve, and this advance itself made through the economic changes which have occurred. In no sense can any isolated practice of such economic levels, even if this were possible, lead to the unfolding of human nature on a general level:

> 'The reality ... of certain establishments at Rome and at Sparta, cannot be disputed: but it is probable, that the government of both these states took its rise from the situation and genius of the people, not from the projects of single men; that the celebrated warrior and statesman, who are considered as the founders of those nations, only acted a superior part among numbers who were disposed to the same institutions; and that they left to posterity a renown, pointing them out as the inventors of many practices which had been already in use, and which helped to form their own manners and genius, as well as those of their countrymen.' 1

Theoretical writers do not deny, either, that particular forms of government may lead to a concentration of individual or small-group power, as is to be seen in feudalism particularly. This is necessarily produced by the economic situation of the society and is supported by the particular institutions which naturally grow up in such a society, such as individual service and loyalty to one, rather than to the state, and the centralisation of power within miniature states. At the same time, however, it is the entire society which is affected by this process, even

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1. Ferguson, Essay, p. 124.

if the effect is detrimental to their evolution. The lords exist as rulers only because of the labour of the serf class and the respect of the lesser lords, the whole of which is produced by the economic nature of the society. The entire feudal system, therefore, is one in which certain individuals can act as they please and can change society to suit their whims, but who must also be limited by this society itself. They are as affected in their manners, their sense of 'rights' and of 'duties', their customs and institutions, as are all those less materially fortunate.

Furthermore, the theoretical history does not deny the achievements of the various individuals who have contributed to social development through inventions, travel, discoveries and similar factors.[1] These achievements and that to which they have led over time - the opening up of new trade routes, for instance, and the breakdown of older forms of property holding - have been of considerable benefit, and yet even these actions are limited. But they point out that while inventions depend for their existence primarily on the individual, the actual usefulness of them and perhaps the basic cause of the invention itself, must necessarily come from the extent to which the society is prepared to accept and use it. There can be no major change or breakthrough outside of the social process itself, in the sense that all discoveries, information gleaned from travel and so on, achieve their fullest meaning only when incorporated into practice and into common usage. Further-

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1. Of particular interest here is Robertson, America, Works, III, pp. 1-59.

more, we may also see that the major benefits of particular innovations often result from the later, unplanned benefit which is gained from them, and this can in no way be connected with the individual originally involved.

The great man, who can change the society, and from whom vast changes come, is more a feature of general philosophical writing which lacks the theory of interconnecting and long-established causal factors to explain profound changes, and which does not so much emphasise the necessary relationship between great men, and the background in which they work[1]. The theoretical writers' position on this is especially clear in the specific rejection by them of the concept of the 'legislator', for, they make clear, any major set of laws, as well as being peculiar to each individual system, must also come from the social experience. As they believe that law itself is the result of the experience and social level of any particular group, so also do they believe that laws cannot be said to exist until they are an integral part of social life. Of the division of classes in India, Millar wrote:

> 'This division of the people, which goes back into the remotest antiquity, has been ascribed, by historians and political writers, to the positive institution of Brama, the early, and perhaps fabulous legislator of that country; but, in all probability, it arose from that natural separation of the principal professions or employments in the state.' 2

More specifically, Ferguson mentioned the principle of heterogeneity as forming a necessary part of our interpretation of all customs and institutions, and as being the basis for our critical assessment of earlier accounts

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1. See Chapter I, pp. 25-33.
2. Millar, Hist. View, I, pp. 325-326.

of development of states: 'we are ... to receive, with caution, the traditionary histories of ancient legislators and founders of states. Their names have long been celebrated; their supposed plans have been admired; and what were probably the consequences of an early situation, is, in every instance, considered as an effect of design.'[1] Yet he believes, with all theoretical historians, that design of this kind is not possible; it suggests conscious planning by an individual which is not to be found in any system, and suggests also a sophisticated philosophy of social needs that really only developed in the enlightened age.

As the theoretical philosophy does not accept the importance of the individual person in any society, so also does it deny the importance, at least in the civil state, of what is described as 'accident', of the isolated and unexpected action. Philosophies which stress this element are generally of a spectacular nature in that they lack a principle of stability, emphasising that man is continually subject to fortune, and that he is constantly tossed about by factors far beyond his control. Such interpretations, whether teleological or not, tend to see man as simply just another factor in a complex world, and fail to establish any basis from which such fluctuations as are experienced can be overcome. The theoretical philosophy itself attempts to break down this interpretation of the past, and it does so through its central features of the capacity of man to

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1. Ferguson, Essay, p. 123.

progress, and of the heterogeneity of ends especially as expressed through the possession of property in all its various forms.

There is, in particular, an emphasis in the theoretical works that, although in the history of states there may be certain isolated incidents that have a particular effect, this effect is necessarily related to the general level of development of any state and that in the civil society matters which are genuinely unique do not gain any permanent place in the social structure. In Millar's interpretation of the English constitution, for instance, he points out the reasons for the particular degree of political freedom[1] in the society, which is greater than that of other similar European societies, and he also points out how each particular aspect of this freedom becomes an integral part of the social structure. Although he may indicate, therefore, that such processes can sometimes be considered accidental in the sense that they are unique and because we cannot necessarily predict the form changes will take, they can never affect the society profoundly unless they are institutionalised by the tacit acceptance of all members of the society. As the individual man, the legislator, therefore, must always be seen as working within a particular framework, so also must each new event of

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1. This 'freedom' is that which is produced by the best development of the human mind relative to the theoretical limitations; hence, it is not an 'absolute' state of liberty but one always related to and dependent upon the particular economic level, as well as on certain social advances which are at least possible because of this economic situation.

major signidicance be seen in relation to its effect on an entire system.

In Millar's work this is illustrated in the development of more widespread popular powers through the repeated appearances of the lesser gentry in parliament; had the original appearance of these, resulting as it did from political reasons, been an isolated one, then the uniqueness of the event would have been retained, and the effect on later development of political divisions been very small. The heterogeneous benefit here is dependent on certain consistencies, certain continuations of events. The importance of the institutionalising of events is also to be seen in the benefits achieved from the failure of Henry VIII to consistently use very wide-spread powers which had been granted to him[1], this failure leading such powers to become isolated and unique events which did not form a part of the constitution:

> 'If these powers had been ascertained, and confirmed by usage, the government of England would have become as absolute as that of France was rendered by Lewis the Eleventh. Fortunately, the English monarch, from the obsequiousness of parliament, had little occasion to exercise this new branch of prerogative; and, as he did not live to reduce it into a system, the constitution, in the reign of his successor, returned into its former channel.' 2

It is apparent from these instances that the vital elements of 'accident' are those which totally upset any system, and which achieve their effect through being foreign to the social experience. When we establish that particular factors are always relevant to economic levels,

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1. Millar, Hist. View, II, pp. 441-442. See also below, pp. 350-351.
2. Hist. View, II, pp. 442-443.

that, apart from the devastating effects of climate and the unexpected on primitive man, we are generally not affected by such isolated matters, then man is seen to achieve a greater stability. He can no longer be profoundly disturbed by life and he is able to control it through the natural expression of his developed qualities.

The fundamental laws of this historical philosophy, based on the 'scientific' observation of man and the collection of data from many forms of society, shift the attention from the physical and the isolated and concentrate it instead on the constant and regular elements that mark human existence. By these means the theoretical writers consider the general rather than the unique at the same time as they relate the unique to the general, thus revealing what they see as the interconnection of all historical facts, and thereby creating a historical philosophy which overcame many of the difficulties faced by earlier writers.